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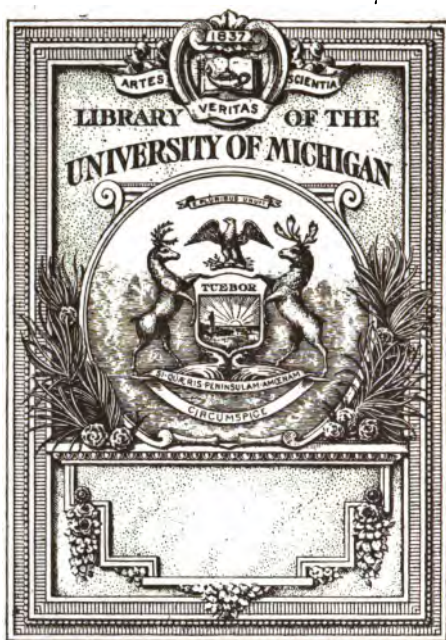
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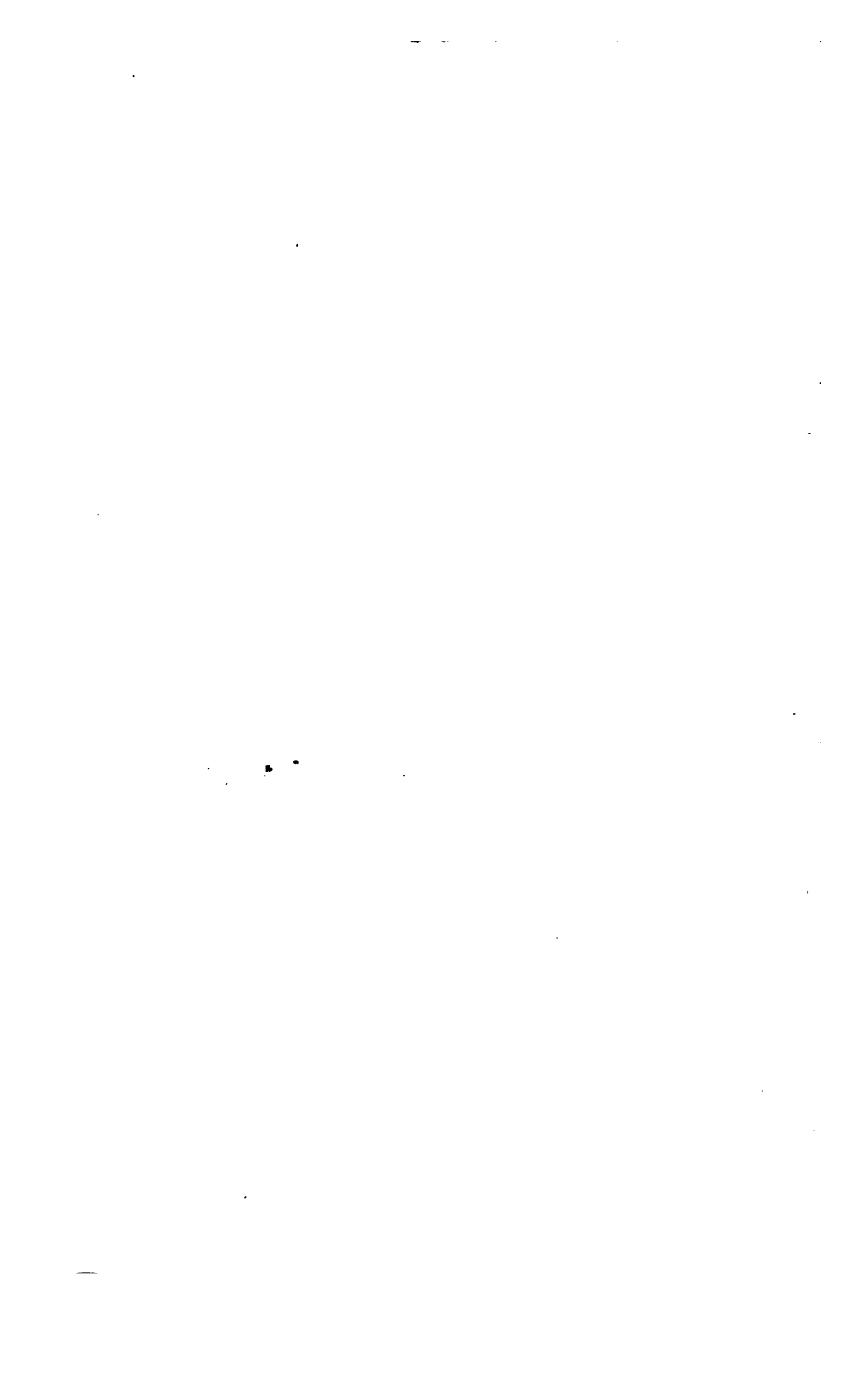
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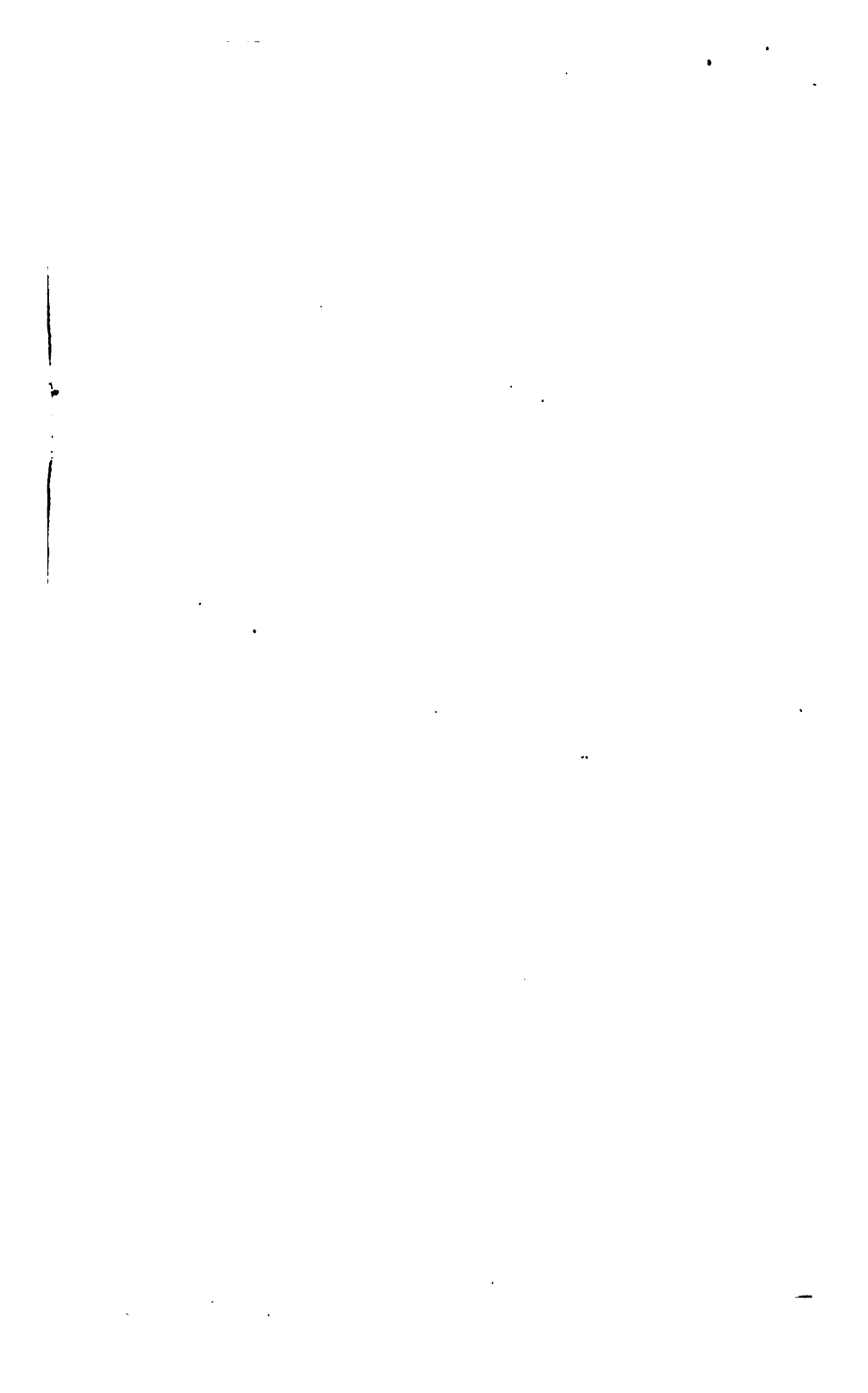
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Geo. W. Wales  
— 1855 —

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# THE BLACKGOWN PAPERS.



BY

L. MARIOTTI.

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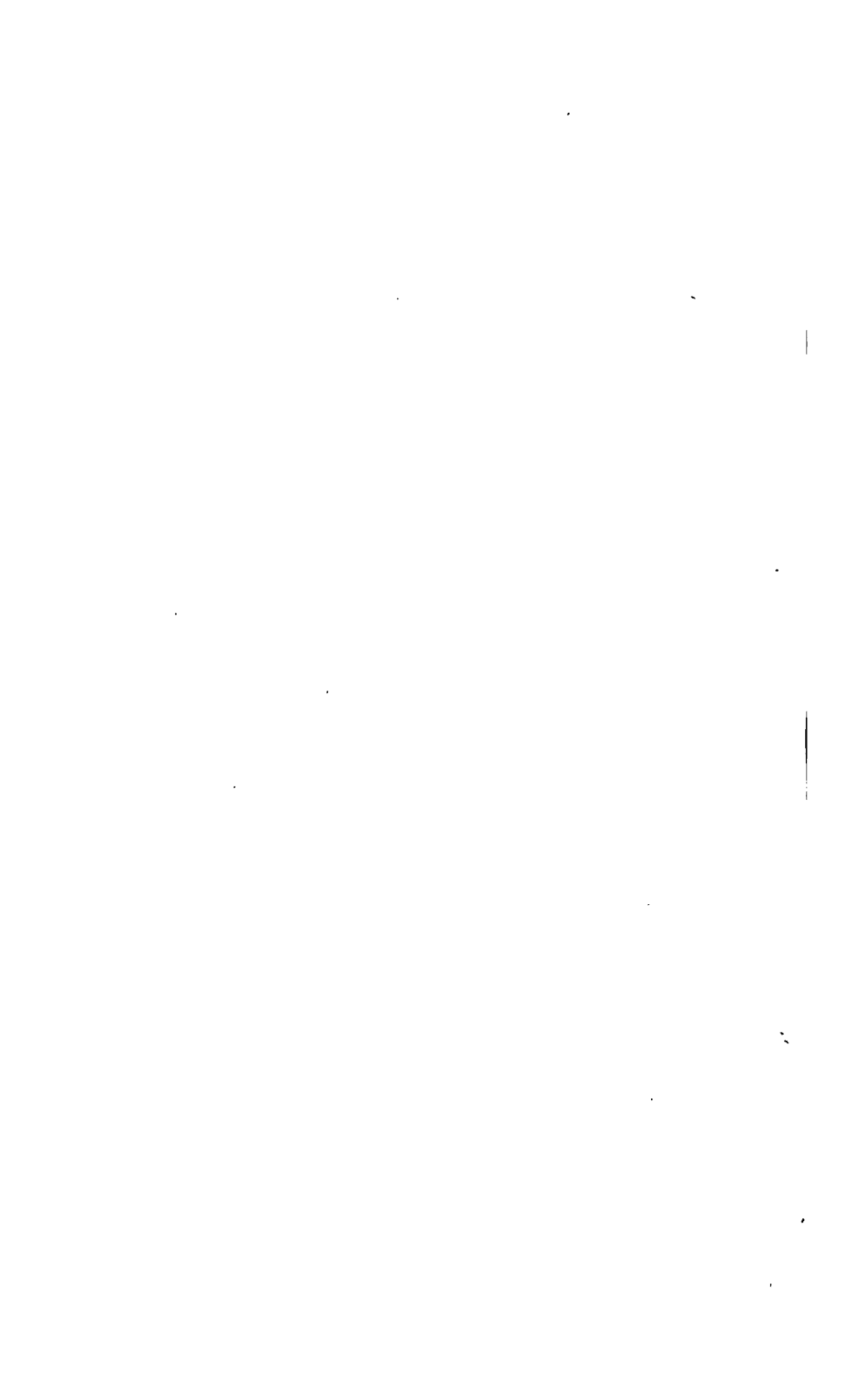
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BY JOHN LESLIE, Esq.

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**MORELLO ;**  
**OR,**  
**THE ORGAN BOY'S PROGRESS.**



**I.**

**BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.**

THE native land of the Italian organ-boys is an unknown country to the English traveller. Tourists are a gregarious, imitative race. Their progress has all the periodical regularity of a flight of wild geese. Mariana Starke and John Murray have traced out their route to a minute, and to a penny. Byron has taught them to "stand at Venice on the Bridge of Sighs," and fall into raptures before the "Venus that loves in stone."

**B**

The English pilgrim is thus saved the trouble of having a taste or a will of his own. He knows every sight and show that is to be seen. Beyond, there is only chaos and wilderness; hard roads, hard beds, and harder fare; bandits, vampires, and Lestrignons. With an eye to his comforts, he never ventures beyond the confines of English Italy. The volleys of sugar-plums at Naples, the mummeries of Passion-week at Rome, are all he studies of Italian life. His types of national character are drawn from the courtier-prelates who procure him the honour of kissing the pope's toe, or from the half-naked lazzaroni, among whom he flings a handful of coppers to enjoy the fine fun of setting them by the ears, or to see them swallow a yard of macaroni at one effort.

Once upon a time, in the heyday of life, I remember having been a traveller of a very different class. I was young and active, and fond of excitement; I shunned the beaten track, and set out in quest of adventure—I aspired to the glory of a discoverer. I shouldered my double-barrelled



gun, and not forgetting honest Iago's advice, I "put money in my purse." I travelled on foot, attended by a red-haired muleteer's lad, with a shaggy mastiff at my heels. Thus equipped, I made up my mind, like Columbus, to find out a new world or—to starve.

I searched over hill and dell, every cliff and crag in the Appennines—I ran over the wooded ridge from its deep-set roots, near the rocks of Oneglia, to its wide-spreading branches in the wilds of Calabria. For full twenty months, over a track of seven hundred miles, I led the life of a wild Indian. I sat down at many a smuggler's board, and rested in many a bandit's lair—I shot down the eagle and hunted the wolf—I stemmed the roaring current of the mountain creek, and forced my way through the maze of impervious woods.

The sights I saw, and the vicissitudes I met with in that epic march, are not, however, the theme of the present story. If I allude to them now, it is merely because it was at the very outset of that

eventful excursion that chance led me to visit the land of organ-boys.

If you ask any of the organ-grinders about the London streets, what part of the world he comes from, he will be sure to answer in his half-whining, half-singing tone, "Eh, signore! son de Parma per servirla!" The probability, however, is that he never saw that town, or set his foot on its lovely plain. He is a native of the Parmesan Appennines, as his image-selling brother comes from the mountains of Lucca. To that cluster of hills which rises between the shores of Genoa, and the level lands of Parma and Piacenza, to the upper vales of the Taro and Trebbia, of Magra and Serchio, the immense majority of these poor Italian vagrants belong. Their head-quarters, however, are in the Val-di-Taro, a broad and smiling, but sterile region, whose teeming inhabitants have been, by turns, a host of brigands, and a band of smugglers, and have now been systematically reduced to a swarm of beggars.

On the road between Compiano and Bardi, on

the very brow of the Appennine ridge, there spreads a wide extent of thin pasture-grounds, known under the name of the *Tavoliere del Pelpi*.

Around this vast table-land rise the steeples of Terzogno, Bedonia, Sidolo, and other villages whose denizens claim the right of feeding their flocks and herds upon that almost measureless common. The meadows, however, are covered with snow for six months in the year, and during that period the whole region is turned into a battle-field for the elements to run riot in.

It was in the winter of 1830 that I first ventured into that district, anxious to wage war against the wolves, whose hungry howlings alone, at that time of the year, enliven the stillness of the dreary solitude. There I made acquaintance with one Teodoro Sidolo, a famous huntsman, as well as a land and cattle-owner of the hamlet of the same name. Each of those villages is inhabited by one tribe or family, bound by ties of kindred, and known under one common appellation, in a manner somewhat analogous to the Highland clans.

My friend Teodoro was as fine a specimen of Alpine manliness, as I ever set my eyes upon. His southern blood glowed under his nut-brown complexion, like a vein of molten lava under a layer of the same material hardened by time. His grey eyes had a hard, wild, earnest stare, never subdued by the broad noontide sun, never affected by the glare of the glittering glacier. Heat and cold, hunger and weariness, seemed to have no effect on his adamantine frame.

On our first field-day, Teodoro briefly related his story. To the best of his recollection, he was in his fortieth year, a married man, with six children, five girls, and an infant boy, whom he had christened Morello. In his youth, Teodoro had fought against the French. Led by their priests, the mountaineers of the Appennines continued, more or less, in open hostility against Napoleon, during the whole period of the French occupation. In Italy, no less than in Spain, the ranks of the conquering legions were thinned by the same harassing system of guerilla warfare. Having at last witnessed the "Triumph

of the Holy Faith," as he called the restoration of the Pope and other Italian governments in 1814, Teodoro, who had no taste for smuggling, laid down his rifle, and set up for a quiet and peaceful subject. He came back to his scanty patrimony which had been but too long ravaged by a ruthless enemy. He built up his father's hut, fenced his meagre lands, and pruned his chesnut-grove. Well aware, however, of the insufficiency of his property as a means of subsistence, he warded off starvation at home, by seeking employment abroad.

The tillage of the Tuscan marshes, and the labours of the harvest season in Lombardy opened a wide field for his industry. In times of peace, the rich plain afforded then, and might now far better afford, ample means for the support of the surplus population of the barren mountain. Teodoro, with a thousand other reapers, set out from his native valley early in June, made the tour of the plain to see the harvest-home of a hundred fields, exchanged a few bushels of his chesnuts for as many bushels of Indian corn, to procure a yellow, or at

least a gray, instead of a brown pudding for his family, and hastened back to be in time for the more tardy and less luxurious crops of his home fields.

In October, he marched in the van of the southern emigration ; he ploughed his way through the rank Maremma as far as Sienna and Grosseto, sometimes to the Campagna di Roma ; or embarked with a host of Lucchese at Viareggio, to try his fortune on the Corsican shores—and if God blessed his labours, if he had the good luck to escape the effects of the *malaria*, he appeared at Christmas on the threshold of his highland home, a shade yellower, perhaps, in the face, but still in the best health and spirits, and with sometimes ten, sometimes even thirty and forty crowns in his pocket. Such was in those days the life of the most orderly of the inoffensive part of the Val-Tarese peasantry, the fathers of the organ-boys of our present generation. Six or seven excursions, such as we have described, enabled the thrifty Teodoro, in as many years, to build the incipient fortune of his rising

family. At the epoch of my visit he had already retired from active life. He was the owner of six heads of Swiss cattle, besides a considerable flock of goats and sheep : his lands, now he was settled at home, were in excellent trim : his house snug, his wife plump and dimpled, his children as fat and dirty as their darling playfellows the pigs.

I was the guest of Teodoro di Sidolo for nearly a fortnight. In the morning we took the field together, and a more faithful and intelligent guide, or a more pleasant companion in those wild mountain sports, it never was the good fortune of a wolf-hunter to meet. In the evening, crackling fires and cheerful smiles awaited us on our return. After supper, five romping girls crowded upon us, striving to climb on their father's knees. Teodoro patted now one, now another, on their thin and sun-burnt necks with parental complacency ; but all the pride and hope of his heart were obviously centered on his only son ; and certainly a merrier or lustier little fellow than that chubby Morello never crawled on all fours. His dark hazel eyes and delicate

features, endeared that child to the brave mountaineer, who fancied he beheld in him a living picture of Santa, his wife.

“ It is for this little rogue I have toiled,” he often exclaimed, glancing with a proud joy round his well-stocked kitchen. “ Praise be to God, who has blessed my labours! My son shall never have to beg his bread.”

Alas! for the vanity of human expectations! Only three months later, that hopeful child was an orphan. The political tumults of central Italy, in 1831, had driven to the Appennines swarms of illustrious fugitives. The daring mountaineers, with their innate feeling of independence, did not hesitate to proffer them aid and shelter, in open defiance of the governments that persecuted them. One by one, with the help of sure guides, the unfortunate exiles were smuggled through the defiles of the mountain passes, and reached the sea-shore in safety, thence to be shipped off to Corsica, or the South of France. In this work of patriotic charity no one exerted himself with more zeal or success than



Teodoro di Sidolo. He had volunteered his services to favour the escape of one Count Baiardi, a political agitator, on whose head the government of Parma had set an enormous reward. He had safely conveyed him through the pass of La Cisa, and on a dark night in March, he was threading his way with him through the Alps of Lunigiana, on their way to Lerici, where a fishing-boat was in readiness for the proscribed nobleman. At the dead hour of midnight they came before Aulla, a frowning mountain fastness, garrisoned by the dragoons of Modena. That fort commands the high road, and a wild Alpine torrent, fordable only immediately under its walls. The river, swollen by an early spring thaw, roared dark and menacing at their feet. At this season of the year, few travellers would, even in broad daylight, have ventured on the huge plank thrown athwart the stream, and which was now quivering and reeling, as if ready to be engulfed in the foaming abyss. Yet the intrepid Teodoro stepped on that dizzy bridge—he reached his hand to his dismayed follower—he held

him almost suspended in the air with his iron grasp. They had now attained the middle of the stream when they were challenged, and almost at the same instant fired at by the sentinels on the fort. Teodoro staggered, and forcing the Count along with him, plunged headlong into the raging billows. The current shot them downwards with arrowy speed. It dashed them against the opposite bank. Teodoro, mortally wounded, was not even in that terrible moment, unmindful of his companion; he clung to him with the tenaciousness of despair; he opposed the bulk of his stalwart frame to the rocks, against which they were hurled with irresistible violence. His own limbs were horribly shattered and mangled in the concussion, but the Count was cast ashore, although senseless, almost perfectly unscathed.

## II.

## THE JOURNEY.

TEN years had now elapsed since the ill-fated mountain-hero had thus lavished his life for the safety of a fellow-being. Time and absence had almost effaced from my mind the very remembrance of that tragical catastrophe, when, in August, 1840, I was ascending the St. Gothard, on my way to the North. I had left my *vettura* to toil its weary way as it could and walked forward alone, with my soul all alive to the grandeur of the surrounding scenery. It was a calm, balmy morning. God alone, and His everlasting Alps were around me. The ineffable purity of the air, the solemn silence of that hoary wilderness, the awful majesty of those mighty peaks, reared up like so many unhewn thrones for a consistory of Olympic deities—all had contri-

buted to wind up my spirit to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, when my thoughts were suddenly summoned down to the earth by the immediate vicinity of a fellow-traveller trudging laboriously at my heels.

“ Who is there ? ” I cried, rather sharply, and not over-pleased at this sudden interruption.

“ Eh ! *signore*, sono un povero *Taliano*,” drawled out a panting boy, about ten years of age.

“ Ha ! an Italian ? And where are you going to, my boy ? ”

“ Eh ! *signore*, se va in *Ingliterra*.”

“ To England, poor fellow ! Rather a long run, I should think, for thy short bandy legs.”

“ Eh ! *pazienza* ! ”

I turned back to look at him. His air of cheerful resignation interested me. A boy of that age, on such a journey, under such circumstances, uttered his “ *patience* ! ” with the accent of heroism.

“ And art alone, my poor lad ? ” I asked.

“ Eh ! *signore*, I me’ *compagni* son innanzi.”

“ And what is your name, child ? Where are you from ? ”

“ Eh! son Morello de Sidolo.”

The name startled me. I fixed my eyes upon him. The boy had the dark hazel eyes, the fine features of Teodoro's wife. It was the only son of my host of ten years since.

In half an hour's conversation I was enabled to make out the particulars of the boy's life. The thought of her helpless children alone, had given the poor widowed Santa strength to survive her husband's fate. With the assistance of her neighbours, and with as handsome an allowance as Count Baiardi, now himself harassed by penury in the land of exile, could afford, she had contrived to manage the little property on which Teodoro laid so much stress. But as the Italian saying has it, “ I malanni son come i frati, vanno sempre accompagnati.” An epidemic disease for several years thinned the flock in her fold: the Count fell in battle abroad, and the gratitude of his relatives was not proof against time and oblivion. Famine ravaged the Appennine districts, and Santa's neighbours, anxious for their own daily bread, began to

slacken in their charitable zeal in behalf of the helpless widow. By her needle and distaff, with the help of her eldest daughters, the unhappy woman contrived for a few years to scare the gaunt wolf from the door. But the winter season is long on the Appennines; and, of late, baffled in all her endeavours, she was ready to give herself up to despair, when chance led to her cottage a man, whom she looked upon as an agent of Providence, to save one at least of her children from impending starvation.

This man was Biagio Pelagatti, one of the white-slavers, owners of organ boys in London.

The numbers of these poor emigrants had then already increased to an appalling extent. The systematic traffic of these deluded creatures had begun almost in my recollection. Soon after the peace of 1814, a few poor Swiss and Savoyard vagrants spread over the rich plains of Lombardy, exhibiting dancing bears, dogs, and monkeys, or playing on their bagpipes and tambourines for the amusement of an idle populace. Some of the mountaineers of

the Appennines either joined them or followed their example. Beggars of this sort increased to such a degree, that the Italian towns could no longer afford them subsistence. A few of the most venturous sought their fortunes beyond the Alps. Throughout France and Germany, up to the deserts of Russia, and beyond the seas to England and America, they almost miraculously piped and drummed their way. England especially, the famed land of countless wealth, the El Dorado of continental adventurers, became their favourite resort. In some of the German states, the provident though arbitrary police ridded the country of the nuisance by a decree of summary expulsion. In England, the regulations respecting aliens were fortunately so framed as to offer them an undisturbed asylum.

In progress of time, what had at first arisen from sheer want or idleness of disposition, became the result of villainous speculation. Vagrancy was encouraged and beggary systematised. Two or three wretches established themselves in Paris, in London, in St. Petersburg; they invested their

paltry capital in organs, plaster-casts, and white-mice ; and set up, under the protection of the laws, in countries which had been foremost in the abolition of negro slavery—as traders in human flesh.

One of these scoundrels, and one of the most cunning and unscrupulous, was that same Biagio Pelagatti, a native of Borgotaro, and a denizen of the purlieus of St. Giles.

He was then on a recruiting mission in his native valley. He heard of the calamities of poor Santa di Sidolo, and, grounding his hopes of success on her despair, he offered to enlist her only son.

At the first proposal of a separation from her darling, the unfortunate mother was wild with horror. But hunger and misery pleaded in Biagio's behalf. "The boy," said the tempter, "would be taken into a country where gold flows in the very kennels of the streets. His master would be more than a father to him. He would defray his travelling expenses, though they might cost him sixteen or twenty crowns. He would find him in clothes and linen, and provide for his education.



Once in England the boy would feast at his own table, he would share his last crust with him. He would have nothing in the world to do but to saunter about the London streets with a guitar on his neck, like a little love of a minstrel, playing merry tunes to the fair English ladies, who run wild after Italian musicians."

"But," observed the bewildered Santa, still with a sense of undefinable misgiving, "but my poor Morello knows never a note of music, and——"

"Bless your heart and soul," interrupted the cunning Biagio, "what do you think the English know or care for music? They are a clever set of people enough in their way; they know how to make more money than they can fairly get rid of; but as for music, they have no more heart and ear for it, than the pitcher in yonder corner. No, no; if they love our itinerant musicians, as they call them, it is their black eyes and white teeth that take their fancy; and if eyes and teeth ever helped a creature to a handsome fortune," said the villain, with a hideous leer, patting the little urchin on his

ruddy cheeks, "why, where is the child that has inherited more dazzling pearl and more sparkling jet from his mother than this boy?"

Against this little piece of rustic flattery a mother's heart had no defence. Biagio produced pen and ink. A bargain was struck, and on the following morning the kidnapped child followed in the blackguard's train. According to the terms of the agreement, Morello was to remain with his master only three years. Biagio solemnly pledged himself to convey the boy to England and back, to feed and clothe him, and to treasure up his salary of six crowns a year, which, at the expiration of the term, should be paid into the hands of his mother.

The boy was no sooner out of sight of his parent's home, however, than he was accommodated with one of the lighter instruments of the craft, and made to understand that he was to beg his way to Calais, where his master would pay for his passage to England in the steerage of one of the colliers plying between Calais and London.

Biagio Pelagatti, who had enlisted about fifty boys during his visit to the Appennines, conducted his little caravan with the tactics of an experienced general. The little beggars, too young and too ignorant to dream of the possibility of escape, were directed to follow the main road from Borgo Taro to Piacenza, and hence to Milan, Lugano, and Bellinzona, on their way to the Alps. They travelled in a long line at ten or twelve miles from one another. Little Morello, the tenderest and weakest of the party, came last; a few miles behind, the slave-driver, Biagio himself, mounted on his mule, closed the march.

The grating of their instruments, their innocent smiles, and more frequently their tears and wailing, would occasionally wring a copper, or more often a crust of bread from the compassionate rustics, on whose threshold the young vagrants stopped to beg. Thus indifferently fed, jaded and bruised, they had toiled through Lombardy, and were now about to proceed on their way to Switzerland and France.

My heart was smitten. I gazed at the way-worn boy whom I had, ten years before, dandled, a boisterous infant, on my knees, and who was hardly yet fit to be removed from his mother's nursing care. I beheld his well-organised frame already bent, and his limbs vitiated under the weight of his apparently light but cumbrous and wearisome burden. I descried in his countenance the bewilderment of a chaos of crude sensations, of crushed feelings, of vague fears, of desolate hopes; and withal a cheerful air of endurance, a vigour and buoyancy of spirit, which it would take years of suffering to subdue. My heart was smitten, and, for the sake of his father's memory, I determined to step between him and the evil fate that was in store for him. I proposed to take him into my service if he would but forsake his master for me.

"Eh, signore!" he exclaimed, in that piteous whine which was part of the schooling he received at his master's hands. "Eh, signore! you are a good and a kind gentleman, but I belong to my master. My master loves me, and will make my

fortune, and I promised to follow him to the world's end if he wished, and I vowed it in my mother's presence, and I swore it on the blessed crucifix."

What argument could be urged against such faith and devotion? The best filial and religious feelings of the conscientious boy had been wrought upon to bind the innocent victim to his heartless destroyer!

Then a better thought struck me. His master, I fancied, could be at no loss for new recruits. Nothing would be easier for him than to fill the place of this almost helpless child. One boy more or less could make no difference to him. I resolved to purchase this poor creature off his hands.

I took leave of my little Morello as my conveyance overtook me near the Hospice. I rolled down into the bleak vale of Ursen, and put up at an inn in Andernach. Towards evening the slave-driver arrived, and took up his quarters for the night in the same house.

I had an interview with him, and acquainted

him with my project. He received my proposal with sanctimonious indignation. He asked me with some petulance, what I took him for? He assured me the Milordi Inglesi had often in vain offered him lots of gold for one of those same organ boys; that they were not his to sell; he had them in trust from their parents, and he was a conscientious man. They were apprenticed to him, and he brought them up to an honest calling, &c.

In short, I soon became aware of his unwillingness to establish a precedent which might prove fatal to the interests of his shameful traffic, and saw that, like a slave owner, he was loath to part with any of his victims, lest the emancipation of one individual might eventually lead to the abolition of the whole system.

Vexed and disappointed I pursued my way. I settled in London, and for a whole year I lost sight of Morello and his unfeeling task-master.



## III.

## BEGGING MADE EASY.

IN the month of November of the following year, I was invited to be a spectator of a strange sight. Messrs. Pistrucci, Mazzini, and other Italian gentlemen residing in England, opened a free school for the poor Italian boys. I was shown into a mean-looking house in Greville Street, Hatton Garden. I listened to an affecting address delivered by the gray-headed but warm-hearted director of the new establishment. I cast a glance around, and beheld, with a blended feeling of horror and pity, the wasted frames and wan, haggard faces of the ill-clad audience. It is only when seen *en masse* that one can be made aware of the life of hardship and wretchedness that those Italian beggars endure in this uncongenial climate. I could hardly believe

that I beheld in those misshapen and stunted creatures the children of the bold and sturdy race I had so often seen vieing in daring and intrepidity with the wild goats of the Appennines. Whilst joining in heart-felt sympathy with my generous countrymen, who by so charitable an institution aspired to reclaim those miserable outcasts from their deplorable abjectness, and by a liberal education to rouse them to a proper sense of their dignity as rational and responsible beings, I could hardly help thinking that a little attention to their bodily comforts was perhaps as great a desideratum as the best scheme of moral and intellectual improvement; that feeding and clothing were a boon for which the objects of their charity would be more thankful than even reading and writing.

At the close of that inaugural ceremony I was about to leave the house, when my coat was gently and timidly pulled by some one behind me, and a well-known voice falteringly exclaimed, "Eh, signore! have you forgot poor Morello?" I had not forgotten him. All my feelings of deep in-



terest in that child's welfare were suddenly re-awakened. The lapse of one year had added a few inches to his height, but the blight of rapid decline was already on his youthful countenance.

The misery of the Italian organ-boy, like that of a Carolina slave, blunts and benumbs, whilst it crushes his soul. Morello seemed hardly aware of his suffering. He still cherished and blessed his master with a kind of instinctive dependence. He depicted his vagrant life as one to which he was already attached no less than inured. If he brought home eighteenpence in the evening, Biagio was all smiles and caresses. If he failed in scraping up that sum, indeed, he knew that he forfeited all right to his evening meal, even if he escaped a sound thrashing; but that could hardly occur twice in the week. Morello was a great proficient in the multifarious science of begging. He had acquired method and tact in his strolls. He had studied his way with a shrewdness which did great credit to his organ of locality. The map in his brain was dotted with golden marks, point-

ing out the situation of compassionate parlour-windows or bountiful area-steps. The little knave made himself punctual and assiduous in his rounds till he became almost a necessary visiter. His roguish leer, his humorous accent of distress, were absolutely irresistible. Few of his trade were ever more petted and spoiled by London charity.

Early at daybreak he jumped from the straw couch which he shared with half-a-dozen fellow-mendicants. Unkempt and ill-washed, he groped his way from the thronged garret, his dormitory, and hastened down to the kitchen, where his *polenta*, an Indian-meal porridge, was smoking in an enormous cauldron, under the vigilance of his sour-looking *maestro*. After having scalded his throat with a few spoonsful of that tasteless stuff, each boy shouldered his *mestiere* (so by antiphrasis they call their instruments), and was turned adrift into the London streets. The whole world lay open before them. They were only bound to make their way back some time at night

with a certain sum (from one shilling to two and sixpence) in their pocket. Morello, as we have said, was tasked eighteenpence ; where, when, and how he got it, was no concern of his owner. So long as the silver or copper was forthcoming, all went on smoothly enough between master and slave. The mendicant might take to the kindred trade of thieving ; so long as he kept clear of the police, it mattered not. Happily, however, those wretched organists, though degraded, are seldom actually dishonest : even the surplus of their daily earnings is faithfully deposited in the hands of their grasping employer.

Morello's excursions were usually to the most fashionable quarters of the West-end. Down Holborn and " stony-hearted " Oxford Street, he picked his way towards Chelsea, Brompton, Kensington, and Bayswater. Near the fence of the neat suburban love-cottage, under the window of the rustic ale-house, many a time I met him with dreamy eye and gaping mouth, lazily and listlessly grinding his instrument. Whenever he

caught a glimpse of me, his music was brought to a sudden stand. He hobbled up to me, he blushed, he smirked, he grinned, he whined, and fawned upon his old acquaintance with all the lively, though speechless, fondness of a playful puppy.

But, alas! the perceptive faculties of that intelligent creature were developed at the expense of his native innocence. The base cunning of the consummate beggar lurked beneath every fold of his dimpling cheek. He had already acquired a powerful relish for that kind of gipsy-like vagabondism which unfitted him for all useful and honourable pursuits in after life. Every time I met him, his dress was a shade more squalid, his face more irreclaimably dirty, his manners more pert and impudent. The intercourse with his older and more wary companions hastened the work of contamination. I often caught him in the act of gambling away his master's coppers with some of his fellow-bondmen in their games of *la spanna* or *la mora*, on the doorway of some nobleman's

house in Portman or Cavendish Squares; himself the happiest, and always the noisiest, of the little group, though the result of an unlucky cast might lead to the loss of all he had raked up in his peregrinations, and to the horrors of a blank supper and a merciless flogging at home.

It was likewise obvious to me (though any one else might, perhaps, have been deceived by appearances) that his constitution was gradually undermined. No hard work in the factory, in the mine, or the plantation, can prove more fatal to manly vigour than that slow but incessant journeying, that perpetual exposure to all the inclemencies of the air, that constant stooping under an unwieldy machine, without a sufficiency of sleep, without the means of habitual cleanliness, without the compensation of a wholesome and nourishing food\*. Black eyes and white teeth

\* Lest it be supposed that I avail myself of the privileges of a writer of fictions to exaggerate the evils of those miserable Italian mendicants, here are a few authentic records from well-informed testimonies :—

“ They are huddled together in one of the most unhealthy,

(as his master prophesied) contributed to alleviate such evils in the case of Morello. So long as tender-hearted kitchen-maids could dispose of an unpicked bone or a stray slice of pudding, the "little love of an Eye-talian" could be under no apprehension of starving. Yet, even under such peculiarly happy circumstances, it was with difficulty that I could recognise in Morello the heir of the broad-shouldered and brawny-limbed Teodoro di Sidolo. It was impossible to foretell how long constitutional strength would bear up against the inroad of disease; but that the young plant was already bowed and blasted in its growth,

the most crowded, the lowest localities of London, in small ill-ventilated rooms, many in a room, worse housed than animals, badly as slaves ever were. From being so many hours a-day under the weight of a heavy organ (to say nothing of their long exposure, ill-clad and ill-fed, to our fickle climate) they contract fearful disorders, such as hernia, varicose veins, diseases of the spine, &c., and it has been calculated by a medical man, one of their own countrymen, that the average duration of time, during which they can continue such occupation is about eight years, by which time their constitution is utterly broken down."—*Address and Rules of the Society for the Protection and Education of the poor Italian boys.*

and never destined to reach maturity, was no longer a matter of doubt.

Yet Morello was happy, as we have seen, the *beau-ideal* of a favourite beggar, the merry-andrew of organ boys. His companions, no less than his benefactors, were partial to him. His masters at the Greville Street school were charmed with his ready wit and docility. Artists and ladies'-maids were enchanted with the brightness and freshness of his ruddy complexion.

## IV.

## AN OLD FRIEND WITH A NEW FACE.

DURING the whole of 1842, and part of the following year, I was absent from England. On my return, intent upon renewing acquaintance with my old London friends, I called on Lady Muscovado, in one of the streets bordering upon Portland Place. The door was opened by a boy in a green jacket, with silver lace and buttons, richly and somewhat fantastically attired. In that house, however, I was prepared for strange sights; so, without taking any further notice of that gaudy attendant, I pushed him unceremoniously aside, when the lad laid his hand on my arm to arrest my progress.

“ Good Heaven, Morello ! ”

That was indeed a metamorphosis. The page



was no other than my own old acquaintance, the strolling musician!

Lady Muscovado's character could be summed up in one word. She was a universal fancier. She loved her greyhound for its transcendent beauty, she fondled her poodle because he was so ludicrously ugly. Her drawing-rooms were an arsenal, a museum of the most incongruous knick-knacks. The odd was for her the beautiful. Her *réunions* had all the extravagance of a motley masquerade. Absurdity and eccentricity was the best passport to her *soirées*. She sealed her cards of invitation with the well-known Italian motto, "*Se non son matti, non gli vogliamo.*"

Gifted with a lively wit and exquisite sensibility, skilled in every branch of art, and otherwise universally accomplished, she protested she was dying of *ennui* from want of employment. Her mornings were spent in protracted visits to every old curiosity shop in Wardour Street and St. Martin's Lane. The evening she consecrated to genial intercourse with her friends. She had a

his heart against the school. He joined the priests and other agents of the Italian police, who cried down that establishment as a seminary of young rebels and atheists, and swore the most horrible oaths that he would flay alive any of his boys who ever dared to set his foot within that hated threshold.

Morello had the presumption to violate this interdict. Fascinated by the kindly and almost brotherly reception he met with on the part of his instructors, he could not find courage in his heart to part with them. He stole from home in the dark, with the connivance of his bed-fellows, and joined his class for months after the school had been the object of the rancorous denunciations of Biagio. This latter had missed him for several evenings, and although unable to prove his guilt, had already inflicted summary punishment on the refractory boy. Finally, on an unlucky night the cruel *padrone* watched his movements and caught him in *flagrante delicto*. The book the boy used at school had not as many letters as were the

lashes with which his literary propensities were visited on his devoted shoulders.

On the morrow of that fearful execution Morello, all black in the face, all maimed and bruised, was, with a parting kick, in the way of a last *memento*, despatched on his rounds. Almost instinctively he travelled towards Portland Place; he stopped under the well-known window, from which a fair laughing lady, who seemed to have nothing to do but to trifle with Italian boys, had so often coquetted with him. The window was there, and the merry lady likewise. She nodded to him; he kissed his hand to her; she sent the footman to summon the beggar to her presence. Little was said—no bargain was made; but in the evening the slave-owner received Morello's organ from unknown hands. The boy was gone.

If I were to assert that our little mendicant's happiness was now perfectly unalloyed, I should state more than I could be able to prove. He lived on sponge-cake, slept on swan's-down, was dressed after an old print of the times of Catherine

de' Medici, and could "dream he dwelt in marble halls." For a whole fortnight his kind mistress would not allow him for one moment to quit her boudoir; at the end of that time the boy began to feel the want of air and exercise. The mansion of his lady, vast as it was, seemed like a prison to one accustomed to the open skies of sunny Blackheath and Wimbledon Common. He missed the raking melodies of his crazy organ; he missed his little countrymen; he missed his friends, the merry housemaids on the high roads. In short, had it not been for the glittering finery he was robed in, he would have deemed his old roaming life better suited to his taste than the golden cage he was now confined in. He could not, indeed, think without a shudder of meeting his master's wrath, by going back to him, and throwing himself at his feet; but he saw with an aching heart, that though domiciled in the West End, he had not yet got beyond the limits of the region of kicks and blows. Her ladyship's tall English footmen, who, with a proper sense of national

jealousy, could ill brook their mistress's partiality for "furren warmint," as they called my lady's maid, cook, nurse, and *chasseur*, took every opportunity to vent their rancour against poor Morello, who they perceived was too well broken in by his old employer to rebel against those who had power to inflict bodily harm, or even to prefer a complaint against them. Nay, more ! even the foreign domestics, who had so much in their turn to endure from their fellow-servants' ill-will, could not look without an envious spite on the new favourite ; so that, with the exception of the drawing-room, there was not a nook in the whole mansion, from the cellars to the attics, in which the handsome page could venture to put his foot.

In such state matters stood at the time of my visit to Lady Muscovado. The fair benefactress was too proud and happy to exhibit her new toy ; but when, with my ordinary bluntness, I blessed her for her charity, and thanked her, as an Italian, for the generous impulse which had prompted her

with the thought of rescuing that unfortunate being from a life of degradation, to make him a useful member of her household, methought the lady coloured and looked blank, as if she had never viewed the subject in so serious a light.

Soon after that interview, Morello ceased to be a pet ; he was dismissed from her ladyship's immediate service and transferred to the servants' hall, there to make himself generally and indiscriminately useful. His tormentors took good care that he should never fall ill from want of employment ; but in proportion as they saw him more helplessly consigned to their mercies, and more fairly brought upon a level with them, their enmity began to abate of its former intensity.

Morello had now been nearly three months in the house, and began to be reconciled to his new mode of existence, when the Greville Street school celebrated its first anniversary. Lady Muscovado, as a patroness, consented to grace the meeting with her presence. She repaired to Hatton Garden in her modest brougham, with only

one footman seated on the coachman's left, on the box. Unperceived by all, Morello had crept, and ensconced himself in the back of the carriage, and equally unnoticed he stole into the school-room on his mistress's footsteps.

Lady Muscovado, though unconscious of wrong, was not altogether without uneasiness respecting the mode in which she had come by Morello. A vague dread that the boy might be somebody's property, occasionally flashed across her mind; and although, in accordance with that saying which attributes such a peculiar flavour to stolen apples and stolen kisses, she cherished him all the more from the idea that there was something like contraband in the case, yet she had been a hundred times on the point of making inquiries on the subject, but had put off her resolution with that heedlessness and procrastination which formed so prominent a part of her character. She ordered the boy never to leave the house, notwithstanding, and, till the evening in question, Morello had been altogether a prisoner under her roof.

On the night of the anniversary, the boy heard the words "Greville Street, Hatton Garden," communicated from the maid to the footman, and from this latter to the driver on the box. The force of old association, the desire of change and diversion, and, perhaps, the wish to be seen and stared at by his former comrades in the peacock-feathers of his picturesque costume—a sudden, irresistible whim seized the doomed Morello, and before "bang went the carriage-door and crack went the whip," he had formed and carried into effect his rash resolution. Lady Muscovado knit her gentle brows, when, on taking her seat, she beheld him standing behind her chair; but the eagerness, the raptures of wonder and delight with which her little tiger was hailed, handled and cheered by his old associates, soon drove all thoughts of the boy's imprudence from her placable mind. All the addresses were spoken, prizes were awarded, and the meeting broke up. Lady Muscovado could not perceive that an unknown cab drove in pursuit of her brougham



till it saw her with her page safely deposited at her door.

On the following morning, Sir Harry Muscovado, in his dressing-gown and slippers, was seated in an arm-chair in his parlour, engaged in what was to him the dearest of all occupations; *i. e.*, reading his last night's speech in the House of Commons, with the various improvements of the newspaper reporters. The parlour-door was thrown open, and a man with a sinister mien, Biagio Pelagatti, was ushered into the baronet's presence.

Sir Harry's brain was not so extensive as to admit of more than one idea at a time. It was now stuffed and crammed with corn-laws, sugar duties, free trade. He could hardly understand what a man with a hooked nose and bushy eyebrows, and who talked broken English, could want with him. "The page—her ladyship—the school—my own eyes—responsible to the child's mother—land of equal rights—kidnapped apprentice—violation of hospitality—the law!" That

was all the blackguard could stammer in an intelligible tone.

Sir Harry, a legislator, stood in an almost panic dread of the law. From the construction he could put on the stranger's words, he apprehended that his wife might bring him into some scrape about that silly page of her choice. Without answering one word to the man, who continued mumbling, bowing, and scraping with surly obeisance, the baronet hurried upstairs, closeted himself with his lady, and, after a warm conference, during which the lady alternately shed tears and broke into fits of ungovernable laughter, the page was surrendered at discretion in exchange, as it is supposed, for a German bullfinch, which Sir Harry pledged himself to present his accommodating lady with before that very evening.

Biagio took hold of the arm of his runaway slave. He held it with a tight grasp, wild in the exultation of his soon-to-be-glutted revenge. He spoke not a word, he turned not one glance on his terrified companion. He threaded his way

through the streets, driving the boy along with him in his homeward course. He had him! Yet a few steps, and he had him all to himself!

They reached their dingy dwelling in St. Giles's. With many a hasty tug the slave-driver tore the showy livery from the limbs of the ill-starred lady's page. Then he hurled him, and shut him up in a coal-cellar to muse on his impending fate until evening. Late at night the neighbours were alarmed by piercing shrieks. Morello writhed, and groaned, and howled, and yelled under the severe infliction, till he fell fainting from the hands of his ruthless master.

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## V.

## MORELLO SHOWS BLOOD.

No sooner had Morello recovered from the fearful castigation which confined him to his bed for a fortnight, than he found himself promoted. That is, he was accommodated with a heavier and louder organ, and expected to bring home half-a-crown instead of eighteenpence. His first steps were almost instinctively turned towards the home of his short-lived and disastrous pagehood. Unaware of the share that his light-hearted mistress, by her inconsiderate and unconditional desertion, had had in his misfortune, he longed for one more glance, one more smile of her beaming countenance. In vain. The blinds were all down. The knocker was nailed to the door. Lady Muscovado had left for the winter. The boy heaved a deep sigh. He

brushed away a tear with his sleeve, and inwardly vowed never to pass that threshold, never to trust ladies with fair ringlets, and laughing blue eyes again.

His daily task had now become laborious and irksome. Those few weeks of magical bliss in what had been for him the Castle of Indolence in Portland Place, had to a considerable extent unfitted him for his lowly trade. He had grown too proud to beg. Sullenly, doggedly, he threaded his way through the cheerless streets, grinding away for very life, as if with a hope of extorting by importunity the alms he no longer hoped to earn by his coaxing and cajoling ways. His deep-toned instrument had raised him to a man's dignity. New recruits, fresh from the South, had in his absence usurped the place he had so long monopolised as the pet of London Abigails. Sour-looking beadles and cross-grained lawyers' clerks ordered him off their premises. The ominous "Move on!" of the police incessantly thundered in his ears. The blush of happy boyhood had

utterly deserted his cheeks; youth and beauty no longer enlisted any man's sympathies in his behalf. Henceforth he was to fight his way unfriended through the world.

Once, and once only, it was in my power to stand by him as his protector. The London urchins, as much alive to fun and mischief as the *gamins* of all other large towns, allowed him not an instant's truce. They drowned the pathetic strains of his organ by the din of their rattling castanets. They danced the polka on the pavement around him, contriving to kick his shins in the whirl of their rapid evolutions. They worried him, pelted him, set their snarling curs at him, with the overbearing heedlessness of free-born children. In short, they looked on the foreign mendicant, somewhat with the feelings of Spartan schoolboys when the brutified helot was brought, a helpless butt, amongst them.

In this condition I found him one day, in one of the large thoroughfares in the neighbourhood of St. John's Wood. Three boys of his own age, but

evidently belonging to a better class than the houseless vagrants swarming through the more crowded quarters of the metropolis, had set themselves at his heels. Heated and breathless, the three rogues pretended to be whipping away at a huge top, whirling between them on the broad flag-stones of the pavement, but managing at every stroke to have a smart hit at the half-stockinged legs of the ragged musician. The mountain-boy smarted at every lash, and kicked in return. He winced, he writhed at the indignity he dared not openly resent. His bronzed cheeks were livid with the smothered pang of Italian vindictiveness.

As soon as he perceived me in the distance, he broke loose from his persecutors, and crossed over to me, clinging to my side timidly, imploringly, as a child to its mother's apron. The mute appeal could neither be mistaken nor resisted. I stepped forward, brandishing my walking-stick in the air, and frowning to the best of my ability.

"Here, you varlets," I cried, "you are a pack of cowards, and no true English boys. Three to one,

shame on you! Come on, one by one, if you dare. This little bandy-legged beggar is more than a match for the biggest of you. Come on! I'll see fair play between you."

It needed not half the bitterness of my taunt to arouse the John Bullism of the three lads. They held a hurried consultation, at the close of which, the tallest of them—a chosen champion—threw away his whip, and stood forward alone.

"Now then, Morello!" I said, turning to my *protégé*, "down with thy cap and jacket, and have a hug and tug at the Briton. Show him thy teeth, and hurrah for dear old Italy!"

"Anan!"

The boy understood me not.

I pulled forth my purse and held out a sixpence. It was a bran new silver piece, fresh from the Mint, bearing the image of the Lady Queen of these realms.

The boy opened wide his eyes.

"Ecco, Morello!" I said, emphatically, "all this money be thine, if thou only givest yon strapping fellow a black eye, or a bloody nose."



The boy's eyes sparkled with wrath and covetousness. No more was needed. I helped to disencumber my champion of his burden, and taking his hat and jacket, brought him to the scratch with all the cool apathy of an experienced bottle-holder.

The combat was short, but decisive. The son of Albion put himself in a pugilistic attitude, squaring his elbows after the most approved fashion. The Italian, an untutored boor, sprang at the throat of his antagonist with the swiftness and rabidness of a wild cat, and bore him down by the mere violence of his sudden onset. Once on the ground, he followed up his advantage with tooth and nail, wreaking his vengeance on his prostrate foe, and scoring his face, till it looked like a geographical map.

It was now high time to interfere. I parted the envenomed combatants; and although Morello had shown but too great an ignorance of the common courtesies of private warfare in this country, I thought myself of Alcibiades, and concluding the little fellow had fought, "not like a cat but a lion," I rewarded his pluck by adjudging to him the prize of victory.

## VI.

## A WINDFALL FOR MORELLO.

ABOUT three months after this memorable encounter, I met the conqueror on the high road across Barnes Common; his instrument slung over his shoulder as he leaned on his long-piked staff, with an air of bewilderment and perplexity.

“*Com' ela, paisano!*” I shouted in the peculiar dialect of his district, reining in my hack, and touching him slightly with my whip to arouse him. “What cheer, ho, countryman!”

“Ah, signore!” he exclaimed, holding up a half-sovereign between thumb and finger, with an unspeakable mixture of wonder and awe. “Ah signore!” he repeated, unable to add another word

—for it was long before he could account for the accident that had made him rich beyond his powers of comprehension.

He had, in that morning's excursion, it appears, pushed his way as far as Putney and Barnes, and was now proceeding towards Sheen and Richmond, with that unerring instinct, which enables those poor illiterate wretches to find their way unassisted, when a *curriculo*, as he termed it, probably a gig, rolled past him at a dashing pace. Two gentlemen sat in the vehicle; they talked loud, and seemed engaged in earnest, almost contentious converse. In the heat of dispute, a pocket-book which lay open between them, slipped, unperceived, from the seat, and dropped on the dust of the road.

Morello was then seated on his organ, resting from his morning stroll. He started up, picked up the portfolio, snatched up two or three thin slips of paper, which had been scattered in the fall, shouting all the time after the gig with all the might of his lungs.

Heedless of his organ and staff, heedless of his

cap, which was swept off his head at the very outset, the boy darted after the flying curricule at the top of that speed for which he was renowned among his early playfellows at home. It was perhaps the last race the worn-down mendicant ever ran in his life. But the fervour of his honest zeal added wings to his feet. He overtook the gig, and being now too utterly exhausted to hope to be heard by his screams, he swung himself on the springs of the light conveyance, and startled the still wrangling travellers by the suddenness of his shrill shout in their ears.

The sight of the soiled pocket-book easily accounted for the interruption, and sobered them at once. The driver hastily threw the reins to his companion, and eagerly laying hold of the precious case, examined it, glanced over the rumpled bank-notes; and when, at the end of his scrutiny, he was enabled to breathe freely, he turned round to the honest lad, who had, at the same time, caused and relieved him from terrible anxiety.

Morello had already alighted, and stood bare-

headed and panting by the side of the gig. After wasting a few words to make the boy aware of his sense of gratitude to him, the gentlemen perceiving the impossibility of otherwise conveying his meaning, had recourse to that language, which, better even than music and pantomime, is so well understood all over the world. He tossed him a gold piece, waved his hand to him, and drove on.

Morello had often beheld, but had never known the real value of gold. All the arithmetic he had ever been taught at the Greville Street school never went so far as to give him a right estimate of the sum of ten shillings in the lump. It was in vain for me to explain that the worth of his glittering bauble was no more than the amount of his four days' earnings. Gold had a dazzling, stunning effect on his brain. Had the stranger's bounty been twice the sum, but in silver, the little mendicant had easily mastered his exultation. He broke out in a thousand ejaculations. He beset me with a thousand infantine questions.

And was this real gold? The same metal he

had seen glaring behind the huge panes of glass in the window of a goldsmith's shop; the same he had so often handled in the shape of necklace and bracelets in Lady Muscovado's dressing-room? and could the gentlemen have made a mistake? Did he really mean all that gold farthing (*quattrino d' oro*) for him?

And—and—he faltered twice or thrice before he put the all-important, the overwhelming question. And was *that* also his master's? was that likewise to go into the begging pocket, to be rubbed against the dirty coppers and clipped six-penny pieces of his day's gathering?

This latter question especially I hastened to answer in the affirmative; and this not so much that I might not have my doubts as to the justice of the claims of his employer to money so extra-professionally come by by the mendicant, as because I began to perceive that the unsophisticated mind of the poor musician was already under the spell of the yellow enemy of mankind. I advised him to lose no time, but to remove the temptation, by

repairing to the next public-house, and asking for the change of his high-valued treasure; by which banking transaction, I assured him, he would that evening go home with such a harvest of halfpence, as could not fail to secure the good graces of his sour master for a twelvemonth to come.

By these arguments, and even by threats of turning informer against him, I extorted his solemn assurance that he would literally follow my advice, and he now evinced as much horror for that luckless half-sovereign, as if it had been turned to red-hot iron in his hands.

But alas and alas! The lad was already deeply tainted with the radical vice which invariably characterises man in a state of bondage. Constraint had taught him simulation: he lied all the time!

A few miles further on I put up at the "Hare and Hounds," at East Sheen. There, standing behind the parlour-window, whilst my horse was being fed, I beheld, unperceived by him, my treacherous friend, plodding in his clumsy manner along the

road, under his accustomed burden, but rapt in stupendous amazement, as he gazed on the stranger's coin, in the palm of his outstretched hand; stopping from time to time, as if to decipher the magic characters, or the blazonries thereon engraven, and occasionally also tossing it up, slightly, as if to feel its weight and satisfy himself of its substantiality.

He raised his eyes suddenly as he came up with human dwellings, and with a true miser's suspicion, casting a hurried glance around, and griping fast his treasure, he drew forth from his bosom a little *breve* or reliquary; one of those ivory caskets with rudely-carved Madonnas, or saints, which the ignorant in Catholic countries are taught by their priests to wear, secured with a string round their necks, a talisman against sudden death, the devil, and his evil devices. Morello opened the casket, and raising the golden image of Queen Victoria to his lips, with even more fondness than loyalty, he deposited the gold piece in the blessed locket; and, thrusting it under his coarse linen, pressed it upon



his heart, with a countenance radiant with redoubled devotion, as if confident of the perfect safety of his rare property under the guardianship of his sacred amulet, or as if this latter had acquired new miraculous powers from the no less saintly image it was now so strangely made to enshrine.

For many months afterwards I lost sight of him; probably because the rogue, fearing I might call him to account, and taking advantage of the superior keenness of his eyesight, fought shy of me whenever chance led him on my path; and, as so glaring an evidence of his duplicity had considerably damped my interest in his welfare, my attention was naturally turned from the undeserving individual to the sufferings of the class to which he belonged.

## VII.

## SAVE ME FROM MY FRIENDS.

THE Italian boys had met with too large a number of zealous friends among the London philanthropists. The directors of the Greville Street school had constituted themselves into a society for the protection, no less than for the education, of the poor Italian boys. A rival establishment had also risen in a neighbouring district of the metropolis, chiefly under English patronage, and mostly made up of reverend gentlemen, who deeming their theological controversies of paramount importance for these ignorant mendicants, directed their efforts to rescue them from the errors of the "Old Scarlet Lady" at Rome, and to initiate them into the "healthful principles of biblical truth." Religious and moral schooling was meant to be substituted for the useful-

knowledge-system adopted in Greville Street. Not, indeed, that the originators of the latter-named scheme of education, though they abstained from too open an interference with the religious tenets of their pupils, ever neglected their moral improvement: but their rivals, accustomed to the open dealings of a free country, would not condescend to adopt cautious or temporising measures. The reverend benefactors made no mystery of their proselytising views. Their avowed object was not so much to assuage the hardships of the boys' captivity; not so much to put an end to it. They sought in them only so many converts to Protestantism.

Safe as the reverend gentlemen felt on their own account, they did not foresee how severely their attempts might be visited upon their defenceless neophytes. The minor agents of the several Italian governments, already on their guard against the humble efforts of the Greville Street establishment, now redoubled their vigilance against these new and more formidable adversaries. Religious jealousy

was added to political suspicion. The Propaganda at Rome made it a matter of crusading importance. A papal legate, a bishop, as I am told (for on this point I merely quote facts submitted to me by a respected friend), was privily despatched to England with a view to counteract these religious schemes, and to look after the lambs unwittingly straying from the fold.

In the clash of these contending parties, the poor organ-boys fared but indifferently. Biagio Pelagatti and his fellow slave-holders fought their battles with the inveteracy of men struggling for existence. Every new attempt on the part of their protectors was visited on the devoted victims. London became a perfect hell for the trembling organists. Happy those among them who could obtain permission to remove from the noisome neighbourhood of Leather and Drury-lanes, and make pilgrimages through the country.

Have any of my readers ever inquired or tried to conjecture, how the organ-boy travels? Have any of the tourists who throw a copper to the little

musician who crosses their path on the banks of the Cumberland lakes, or on the defiles of the Highlands, stopped to consider what Providence guides and supports those helpless wanderers in their eccentric excursions? Have they ever seen one of those strolling Italians perplexed about the road? Was any of them ever seen to put up at a country inn, or pay his fare as steerage passenger of a Channel steamer? And yet, beyond the Clyde, beyond the Channel, among the bogs, and along the moors you have them before you; how they got there, how they are to get back, being alike a mystery! Unable to read, without one word even of broken English, destitute of all means of communication with the natives, these foreign wayfarers follow their path without apprehension or uneasiness; for hundreds of miles, north, south, east, or west, confident of the all-watchfulness of Heaven, and of the kind-heartedness of man. They seldom cross; never interfere with each other. God is great, and the world is wide! The hay-loft in the farm-yard, or the drifted leaves in the sheltered

glen are but too soft a couch to the weary. The crumbs of the rustic table are a feast to the starving mendicant; foot-sore, ague-stricken, frost-bitten, drenched to the skin, on the boy toils with dogged perseverance. Workhouses and hospitals are seldom cumbered with his infirmities. County gaols and penitentiaries are rarely called upon to tender him their gloomy hospitality. He starves and trespasses not. Uncomplaining he suffers. He dies, if need be, as silent as a cat, by the road-side. The forerunner of an ill-starred nation, doomed, perhaps, unless God takes mercy on it, to go forth, dispersed and homeless, like Jews and gipsies throughout the world, the Italian mendicant evinces all the listless hardihood of the wild wandering tribes. His strolling life is much to his taste. Once beyond the bills of mortality, he is at least free; safe for a certain length of time from the dreaded presence of his ruthless owner. A fearful reckoning, it is true, awaits him on his return. But the good-humoured farmer of broad Yorkshire, if blessed with a bountiful harvest; the Manchester weaver, if business

look brisk, will help to swell up his store of small coin to the determined amount. Perhaps also (but this happens too seldom, for that way-worn, dwarfish creature comes of a stout, hard-lived race), the grim accountant-general, Death, will seasonably come to his assistance by a summary compromise which settles all scores.

More than a thousand organ-grinders, or dealers in plaster-casts, are thus incessantly performing their weary round of the British provinces.

I am unable to ascertain whether Morello was, or was not, among the fortunate few who are allowed to wander for a certain length of time away from their head-quarters of misery. I heard nothing of him for above a year, and at the end of that period he was reported—in gaol.

The directors of the Greville Street society, in the furtherance of their charitable object, were not unfrequently driven to extraordinary expedients. Any attempt on their part to rescue the sufferers from a life of thralldom and ignominy, by singly inveigling or kidnapping them, with a view to train

them to a useful and reputable calling, could have met with no satisfactory result. The law would not only empower the *maestro* to claim back his so called "apprentices," in whatsoever situation he found them (as Morello was taken from Lady Muscovado), but even award him heavy damages from the person or persons implicated in their abduction. It was also soon found, on experiment, that but a few months of their idle life were sufficient, physically and morally, to unfit the poor vagabonds for any profitable employment. The menial services of the humblest household were either too arduous or too irksome for them. The drudgery of the meanest craft was too complicated for their crushed understanding. What more?—from their native organisation and early training, a certain vocation and aptitude for music was, very naturally, presumed in them. Fiddles, and pipes, and singing-masters, were provided for them in Greville Street, to dignify their vile trade into an art, and send them forth into the world at least as players and minstrels in good earnest. Alas!



the monotonous clink-clank of their grinding-machines had utterly, irreparably, crazed and shattered their organ of hearing. A man blind from the cradle, is not more hopelessly dead to all notions of colour, than these misnamed musicians proved to be, to all apprehension of time and measure, to the most obvious and essential elements of the science of melody. Those few among them who ever venture to call the attention of the public, by the wild hoarse ditties of their mountain districts, or by unseemly capers on the London pavement, give but too melancholy an evidence of the extent to which the tuneful faculties, so universally instinctive in their countrymen, have been, in their case, shockingly unnerved and blunted!

In the well-established impracticability of emancipating and otherwise utilising the poor Italian boys in this country, or, as it will be seen, of individually sending them back to the land they were so heartlessly seduced from; in the impossibility, in short, of curing the evil radically—it was considered of the greatest importance, at least, to endeavour to

alleviate their sufferings in their present condition. An office was daily opened in Greville Street, offering temporary asylum and subsistence, to all the mendicants driven to despair by their master's ill usage; where one of the members of the society should permanently reside to hear and take note of their grievances, with a view to redress them by peaceful mediation and remonstrance; or, in cases of more flagrant villainy, by referring them to the magistrates. A series of troublesome and expensive law-suits were thus entered into, conducted by an able solicitor with rare zeal and disinterestedness, the result of which, however, was far from answering the sanguine expectation of the protecting association. The most invincible, because most unforeseen, obstacle, arose from the imbecility and cowardice of the little sufferers themselves. The presence of his terrible master had power to strike dumb the crouching slave, even within the sanctuary of justice. Before the stern glare of that well-known gray eye, the demoralised boy felt all his resolution oozing from his fingers' ends. He deserted the

cause of the generous advocates he had, in a moment of rash confidence, ventured to evoke. He stammered, he blushed, he faltered, under the rattling fire of the wily blackguard's cross-questionings. He involved himself in endless contradictions—in an inextricable labyrinth of lies. It was all "*piuttosto sì che no*," and "*non mi ricordo!*" One by one, he gave up the charges his counsel had, under his name, and upon his own oath, preferred against the adverse party, until the puzzled magistrate, in a fit of ill-humour and impatience, declared the whole transaction an ill-natured plot against the honest defendant, and dismissed the suit with a severe reprimand to the boy for falsehood and perjury, and to his advisers for their gratuitous meddling in other people's concerns. What the consequence of this unsuccessful interference might be, and how the discomforted organist fared in the hand of his vexed and worried proprietor, the readers of Don Quixote, who recollect the worthy knight's adventure at the close of his first campaign, will readily imagine.

The tactics of the Greville Street company were now modified from necessity. They determined on bringing the boys themselves into difficulty instead of their masters. They denounced and delivered into the hands of the police as many of them as could be caught in the act of begging. They prosecuted and gave in charge as vagrants such as were but too frequently found fainting with weariness and exhaustion, late after midnight, on the door-steps of the metropolitan thoroughfares. Their organs were seized with them, and sequestered by the police till claimed by the owners, who by a similar proceeding, it was hoped, would be compelled to answer for their inhuman conduct to their dependants. It was expected, by thus exposing and harassing those obdurate villains, and involving them in repeated losses and expenses, to render their iniquitous traffic so onerous that they would end by giving it up in despair.

## VIII.

## MORELLO ON HIS LAST LEGS.

My unfortunate Morello was among the first victims of this well-meant but dangerous system of policy. He had one day sallied forth at a venture on the road of Brentford, Hounslow, and Twickenham. One continued shower of cold winter rain had hailed him almost at the outset, and waited upon him till late after dusk. Scarcely a soul stirred abroad, not a door was open to him on such a dreary day. The mendicant toiled to no purpose. Starvation, and a thorough drenching and soaking were the only returns of his minstrelsy. By the lurid glare of the midnight lamps, with swollen and ulcerated feet, he was jogging vacantly and sullenly on his homeward way; when the conductor of one of the late Hammersmith omnibuses, which

was standing before the door of the favourite public-house in Kensington, motioned the boy to him, and, half in fun, half in pity, held up to his lips a pewter mug containing some muddy abomination which he called "half-an'-half." The strong beverage had a sickening effect on a frame consumed by inanition. Dizzy and fainting, the little wretch tottered on through Kensington Gore and Knightsbridge: the colonnade at Hyde Park Corner, the cabs on the coach-stand, and the bleak and bare trees of the Green Park, appeared as if whirling in mighty confusion around him. Yet a few more steps, and down he sank overpowered with a great crash, as the organ was shattered beneath him. No sooner was the desolate sufferer on the pavement, than several of the watchmen were upon him, poking at him with their staves, and endeavouring to rouse him by many a lusty shake of his tattered jacket. They were already consulting as to the best means of removing the vagabond to the nearest station, when the compassionate feelings even of such beings as wander, at that time of night, through

the streets, were aroused by the faint groans of the swooning lad, and, by their advice, and with their support, Morello was carefully conveyed and safely lodged in an adjoining infirmary.

The honourable guardians of that parochial asylum dealt with rare humanity towards the foreign pauper Providence had so unaccountably thrown upon their tender mercies. But as a night of syncope and delirium was followed by a day of acute pain in the chest, and this again by a week of slow fever, bearing unmistakable symptoms of rapid consumption, those worthies became alarmed at the appearance of a disease which by its chronic nature threatened a longer demand on their hospitality than so utter a stranger to their district and to the country could be entitled to; and as the boy was either unable or unwilling to give any intelligible account of himself, the parochial authorities issued, through the medium of the newspapers, a circumstantial account of their *trouvaille*, calling upon the parents or guardians of the boy to identify their property, and rid them of an intruder.

Biagio Pelagatti was amongst the first to read the advertisement, and could be at no loss to recognise in the description it gave of the forlorn invalid, the person of the only mendicant boy missing in his establishment. Some qualms of conscience as to the account he might be compelled to give of his behaviour to his apprentice, made him loth to venture on personal application; but his wife, a stout, hard-featured Irish woman, hardly less dreaded among the organ-boys than Biagio himself, ventured on a reconnoitring expedition to the hospital. She insinuated herself into the good graces of one of the nurses, a countrywoman and old crony of hers, and after a few minutes of adroit pumping, she was able on her return to give the most accurate report of the state of the little musician, his instrument, his wardrobe, and even the little ivory casket containing the precious relic from the royal mint, which the parish people had found round the boy's neck when searching for some card or paper that might furnish them with a clue to his name and whereabouts.



Biagio's mind was made up instantly. The boy himself, he perceived, would not, for a season at least, be worth his salt. But the organ (out of order though it might be), and that puzzling gold piece, should be looked after and claimed back, after any length of time, were even the boy never to rise from the charitable bed public mercy had so munificently provided for him. As, however, he felt satisfied that his property was safe enough in the keeping of the parish guardians, he determined upon taking no further notice of the intimation, and give the boy a full run of the comforts and luxuries of his present asylum, till at least he had recovered his legs, or the parish had found the means of laying their patient at his door.

I am not quite sure such a scheme might not, in the long run, have ended by bringing the unconscionable rogue into serious hostilities with the parochial authorities, whose humanity and forbearance he so shamefully abused; nor would he have been without uneasiness on the subject, but for the confederate his wife had secured in the enemy's

camp, on whom he relied for timely information of any resolve the people at the hospital might come to. Great was, therefore, his surprise, when, one evening on her return from her customary visit, Mrs. Pelagatti brought the astounding intelligence that Morello, now almost convalescent, had been claimed by some of his friends, and was gone.

The suspicions of the deluded slave-owner were immediately and almost instinctively turned upon the right quarter. The missing boy, he conjectured could only be under the protection of his unwearied adversaries, the Greville Street association. So it was. The advertisement in *The Times* had caught the eye of the watchful secretary of that humane body. He lost no time in writing to the competent authorities, as directed by the notice in the newspapers; he came to a short explanation with them as to the means and ends of his society, and was gladly empowered to remove the unclaimed guest, with all that belonged to him, together with a unanimous vote of praises on the part of the guardians, and their most unqualified thanks for the riddance.

By the aid of the friendly nurse and other spies, Biagio succeeded in tracing his missing boy from the hospital to the door of one of the salaried masters of the Greville Street free school, to whose care Morello had been provisionally intrusted. It was further resolved, at a meeting of the Protecting Association (and of this also the crafty *Maestro* received seasonable warning), to save the victim from future ill-usage by supplying him with the means for his return to Italy.

It did indeed occur to them that the slave-owner might have power to follow the runaway to his mountain home, and claim him back at his parent's hands, so long as the terms of his contract entitled him, and so long as he deemed it worth while so to do: but the broken down constitution of the boy, and the troubles and expenses such a step would put him to, would, they flattered themselves, deter the unrelenting knave from attempting it, when once the object of their anxieties could be fairly got out of his way. In this, perhaps, they did not rightly estimate the character of the man they had

to deal with, for it is not easy to guess to what extremities Biagio might not be urged by his vindictive spirit, and, above all, by his eagerness to impress his little slaves with the conviction of the utter helplessness with which they lay at his mercy, and of the futility of all their attempts to get out of his reach. The experiment, however, was worth making, and after having done their best to bring the invalid round, the society began to exert their ingenuity to plan his escape.

To send back an utterly destitute person from this sea-girt country to the mountains of central Italy, is an achievement fraught with more difficulty than the French *Société de Bienfaisance* have to contend with, when they wish to pack off one of their mendicants to the coast of Boulogne. Not that the organ-boy, inured as he is to all hardships, could be at any loss to make his way through France and Switzerland when once landed across the Channel, provided he were in tolerable health, and supplied with a passport. But in the case of Morello, hardly yet risen from what had so nearly

proved his death-bed, and whose *feuille de route* was in his owner's hands, such a toilsome pilgrimage was no longer to be thought of. Fortunately, the master of a Genoese felucca, homeward bound, was prevailed upon, from mere humane considerations, to take charge of the fugitive, with a hope that he might smuggle him (open landing being altogether out of the question) with sundry coffee-bags and Havannah boxes, somewhere in a lonely spot on the Riviera.

All was prepared in consequence, when, on the eve of embarkation, the house in which our poor boy was a boarder was invaded by a party of thieftakers from Bow Street, who produced a warrant for the apprehension of one Morello di Sidolo, servant boy and apprentice to Biagio Pelagatti, of Leather Lane, on a charge of breach of trust and domestic larceny, and who took him into custody, and locked him up accordingly.

## IX.

## MORELLO AT BOW STREET.

THE police court at Bow Street, witnessed a melancholy scene on the following morning. On one side, on the dock, stood the culprit, pale and sickly, to whom all the assurances of his surrounding friends and advocates failed to impart even the least degree of confidence and equanimity. He recoiled as if dreading the touch of his adversary, and was nevertheless unable to turn his spell-bound gaze from his forbidding countenance. Up to him he still looked with a strange mixture of consternation and loathing, and yet with a contrite, a beseeching air, as if ready to give up the struggle and surrender at discretion, even before justice had sentenced in his favour. On the other hand, his master, all alone, lawyerless, friendless (for the

shrewd villain was aware of the antipathy of police magistrates to the presence of solicitors, who only puzzle their worships and lengthen the suits), livid, dark, scowling, yet cool and collected, nothing embarrassed by his imperfect knowledge of the language, and utter ignorance of the laws and customs of the country; nothing daunted by the formidable array of his opponents.

It was for him to speak first. He stated, in a few but distinct words the nature of his agreement with the boy's only surviving parent, the waywardness and idleness of his disposition, the frequent instances of his insubordination; he dwelt with peculiar emphasis on the long period of his secession to the house of a great lady at the west-end, with whom he had ingratiated himself under false pretences; he expatiated on the loss and anxiety his heartless desertion had occasioned in his well-regulated household; and finally, he enumerated various sums of money unaccountably missing from his desk, among which the identical half-sovereign, the friends and abettors of the

young thief could not deny having found about his person at the time of their last endeavour to inveigle the apprentice from his lawful owner and master.

This last home-thrust took Morello's advocates completely aback ; for the circumstance of the gold piece (which had, indeed, faithfully been delivered to them by the parish guardians, and for his possession of which Morello had at the time given the same account as he did to myself on Barnes Common) had been entirely overlooked by them, as nowise bearing upon the matter now at issue.

Biagio's knowledge of that fatal coin, so correct, so precise, and his asseverations so positive of the boy's guilt, startled and staggered them ; and after a vague attempt at demonstrating the expiration of the term of the boy's engagement, and some flourish of eloquence respecting the heartlessness of his master's conduct towards his dependents in general, and this poor starveling in particular, they requested the magistrate to hear, through an interpreter, Morello's own explanation of the circum-



stance, by which that long-cherished treasure had been found in his possession.

It was by a fatal coincidence, I believe, that my entire ignorance of the boy's arrest, and my engagements that day, prevented me from attending the trial; for, notwithstanding the little imposition practised on myself as to the disposal of his half-sovereign, there could be no two opinions in my mind as to the manner the boy had come by it, and my almost ocular evidence of the boy's adventure with the two gentlemen in the gig, might have screened him from all criminal imputation. As it was, none of his supporters could speak with any degree of warmth on so ticklish a subject, and the refutation of the charge devolved on the defendant himself.

Morello hesitated. He sobbed and shivered, and burst into a flood of tears. It required the blandishments and even the threats of the magistrate, to induce him to repeat his story; and then it came so involved and disfigured by innumerable reticences and circumlocutions; he made such a

sad jumble of it; that no doubt remained in the magistrate's mind, and but little in the boy's own partisans', that the whole tale was an ill got-up fabrication, and that the little felon scrupled not to add deception and falsehood to the theft of which he stood obviously convicted.

The examination would infallibly have ended with his committal, had not Biagio himself thought it high time to play off a little magnanimity.

He represented to the magistrate that the lad's imprisonment would be a punishment to himself—a serious loss to his trade, no less than a source of deep sorrow to all his family; that he had been under the necessity of bringing the matter before the court, that being the only means of defeating the manœuvres of ill-advised persons, who aided and instigated the boy in his undutifulness; that the offence was of a domestic character, and as such, to be visited only with a domestic punishment, with such a degree of paternal severity as might reform and reclaim, rather than demoralise the guilty. He added a few pathetic touches as

to the disgrace any further proceedings would reflect upon a respectable aged mother, and offered, with the good leave of the court, and provided it would secure him from further molestation on the part of the gentlemen opposite, to withdraw his suit, and grant his forgiveness to his errant, but, he hoped, not irreclaimable *garzone*.

The magistrate readily chimed in with the smooth and oily tone of that deep scoundrel's leniency and generosity; and with an unkind cut or two at the members of the association, whom in his heart of hearts he detested as a set of tiresome busy-bodies, he waved assent to Biagio's proposal, and dismissed the parties. The slave-driver laid his gripe on his reconquered boy, and with downcast eyes and many a thankful reverence to the "noble judge!" and "Daniel!", but with an inward chuckle of triumph and glee as he brushed past his crest-fallen adversaries, he quitted the court.

The direst flagellation was nothing to the moments of anguish Morello experienced in the

anticipation of it. In his, as in every other analogous case, the perspective of impending evil was more unendurable than the actual infliction of the most excruciating torture. His terrified imagination conjured up horrors, such as the brutality of his master himself would revolt from. His fears were wrought to raving madness, and it was from a fit of insanity he derived strength to wrest himself from the appalling fate he saw in store for him. As master and slave emerged from Drury Lane into Holborn, they became enveloped in a riotous crowd of porters and cabmen, collected to witness a fight between two of their craft. By a desperate endeavour, Morello disengaged his arm from his master's tightening grasp, and ere Biagio had time to recover from his surprise, he dashed through the throng, and was out of sight.

It was some time, it will be easily believed, before the hapless fugitive slackened his pace, or gave himself leisure to consider whither he should direct his course. On he sped, with dogged resolution, and an unuttered but heartfelt vow, to meet a

thousand deaths rather than again fall into the hands of his tyrant. No other alternative, however, seemed to offer itself. He passed the door of the Greville Street school, he hurried by the threshold of the humble dwelling of his late host, he wandered past the quarter in which most of his known well-wishers resided. But his confidence in them was shaken. His redoubted master rose like a maleficent giant before his startled fancy, and in his presence his friends seemed to quail in sheer impotence, and shrink into utter nothingness. The genius of evil exercised an undisputed mastery over all earthly matters ; no refuge could be safe for him on this side of the grave !

Under the dominion of these gloomy images night overtook him in the vicinity of Blackfriars Bridge. Suicide is usually the act of a free agent ; it is the sad privilege of a highly-refined and lofty, though diseased spirit. The wild red Indian and the black slave seldom or never die by their own hand. It must have been the effect of a disorder equivalent to an overthrow of all the laws of

nature, which caused so humble and abject a creature as Morello to stand on the central arch of the bridge, actually bent on self-destruction. He stood there for a moment ; he looked down on the sullenly gurgling abyss below ; he shuddered ; he gasped for breath. The dark clouds eternally hanging on that dingy river, were lowering frowningly around ; the gloom above and below frightened him as if shadowing forth the region of darkness into which he was inconsiderately rushing. On a sudden, in the East a star was seen struggling through the dense phantasmagory of those flitting vapours, and at the same instant the heaving tide sent up its plaintive murmur as it broke against the pier. The pious mendicant revered the eye of God Almighty in that glimmering luminary, he recognised his mother's voice in the sigh of the gushing waters. The tramp of some passers-by roused him from that awful abstraction, and he hastened from the dangerous spot. Throughout Southwark, Lambeth, and Vauxhall, he wandered as fortune led him, till, overcome by fatigue, he

sank into a deep sleep under the portico of a newly-built untenanted house. His worst apprehensions were re-awakened as soon as consciousness returned at daylight. He was about to turn away from London and its fatal neighbourhood, when happily the thought of his oldest friend in town suddenly struck him. His mind was made up abruptly, and just as I was sitting down to breakfast, I beheld him standing pale and haggard before me.

## X.

## MORELLO'S ESCAPE.

I HAD, on the previous evening, met with the secretary of the society, and heard from him the details of the unfavourable issue of the trial. I had expressed all my regret at the untoward fatality which kept me from the court-house in that momentous emergency, and was musing on the probable consequences of our defeat to poor Morello, when his appearance drove from my mind its darkest forebodings.

In a few words he related his miraculous escape ; he described the roamings, the temptations, the horrors of that terrible night, and wound up by asking my opinion as to what "the blessed Virgin would have said if he had made away with himself!"



I soothed and consoled him, I fed him, I laughed him out of his fears. I assured him from the moment he had entered my house he was safe. I had good reasons to think so. I had never taken a very active part in the doings of the association, though I belonged to it. I was a stranger to most of my countrymen in London, and my being in town was, most likely, unknown to Biagio; my address certainly so. I recollected in good time that I had a card from Madame P——, the celebrated singer, to dine with her on that evening. It was a farewell banquet, as the lady was off on the morrow for the continent. I was well acquainted with her from her youth, and had the most exalted opinion of her character. She is one of those gifted artists whose domestic and social virtues reflect a lustre on a profession which they honour by their transcendent talents. Surrounded by all the intrigues and perils of her public career, the tainted breath of malignity never darkened the crystal purity of her name. She was a *virtuosa* in every good sense of the word.

To the house of this respected woman, in Great

Marlborough Street, I repaired at the appointed time. Few were the guests, all countrymen and friends. Soon after dinner I asked for a private interview, and explained my want. She entered eagerly into my views, and hastily summoned her husband, without whom she could not or would not take any decisive steps. It was soon all right between us, and Morello was free.

Early on the following morning I procured a suit of clothes, such as would be in keeping with the new personage my poor mendicant was to assume. He was now to travel as Madame P——'s errand-boy, and servant-of-all-work, and as such his name was inscribed in the *prima donna's* passport. Towards noon I conveyed him in a close cab to the London Bridge terminus. In a few hours the boy was at Brighton with his new mistress; on the following morning he breathed the fresh and free air of the Continent.

Three or four weeks afterwards I received the following letter from Madame P—— :

“ Amico mio,

“ Here we are at last, in our snug little villa on the Brianza, and here we intend remaining till the carnival, when we are engaged for La Scala, &c.

“ Your little friend, Morello, is in the very best health and spirits, and we are so pleased that we feel loth to part with him. Mr. P—— is making a little groom of him, and he is rapidly winning the good will of all about us. His mother has been here to see him, and there are some negotiations on foot to send to Val-di-Taro for the whole *ménage*. We shall trust the good widow Santa with the little farm we have just purchased on the river-side. Morello, however, is to follow us wherever we go. But never fear, though, we shall leave him at home if ever we travel to London again. The poor lad trembles yet at the mention of that Castracani, or Castragatti, or Pelagatti, or whatever the name of the ruffian may be, as if the whole world were not wide enough to afford him a shelter from his vengeance. Addio.”

## XI.

## CONCLUSION.

By these means, and after so long a period of awful sufferings has one of the thousand organ-boys been rescued from the life of wretchedness, which so nearly proved fatal to him, and which certainly undermined his constitution and corrupted his morals. Ease and happiness may perhaps restore him to the healthfulness and righteousness of his primitive being; but the manly vigour and innocence of his highland-bred race is hopelessly blasted in him. The youth will be only half the man nature intended. In like manner five or six others of his fellow-sufferers have been sent back by the benevolent association which has espoused their cause; others have obtained immediate relief from the same source, and some of the less inhu-

man fellow-traders of Biagio Pelagatti have come to a compact with the society, and have partially entered into its views.

But the resources of this as well as of any private body of men are but too inadequate to the fearful extent of the evil. A fortnight has scarcely elapsed since a coroner's inquest was held by Mr. Wakley on the body of one of those unfortunate boys, who dropped dead in the London streets, in the last stage of inveterate consumption\*. At the moment I am writing, some friends inform me that an epidemic disorder, the scarlet fever, is raging in that quarter, and that more than fifteen boys are laid down in a single house—with that disease which is never so formidable as when

\* He was taken up speechless, and conveyed to St. Giles's workhouse, where he expired early on the following morning. The surgeon, who examined the body, expressed his opinion that to send the creature about the streets, with his lungs in such a state, was little short of murder. But other cases of boys fainting with hunger and fatigue in the London streets, or maimed for life by the brutality of their masters, have often enough been brought before the police authorities, and with but indifferent results.

backed by hunger and dirt. I write down these facts, not because they can be at all unfamiliar to those who ever gave the subject a thought, but because the public at large are engrossed by the cares of other even more serious evils, which come more directly home to their sympathies, and by the side of which the grievances of foreign mendicants can excite but a passing and sterile compassion. I address myself not to the best feeling of English charity, but to the justice and interests of a sound rational people. England has enough of her own poor—too many. These organ-boys are a burden to her, as they are a sore in the eyes of the few Italians residing in this country. Italy stands in no need of emigration. The bountiful land has bread for all its children, if they are only willing to search for the treasures hidden in her bosom. Nor are these poor wretches real emigrants—they are only brought here to serve their term of lazy and vagrant life, and if they survive, they are sent back, unfit for any good either to themselves or others. Their traffic is a

disgrace to their country, as well as to all other states who suffer it.

Now, I say it deliberately, it is in the power of England to put an end to it. The matter may appear too humble for an efficient member of Parliament to take up. But if the English cabinet would only come to a friendly remonstrance with the governments of Sardinia, Parma, and Lucca, and freely state that it has enough to do to support its own beggars, and it is not just it should be encumbered with other people's, those little potentates could hardly help admitting the justice of its demands. Now, not one of the Italian mendicants ever quits his native land without an express consent of his rulers. Absurd as it may appear, none of them travel without his passport, and the diplomatic representatives of their respective states preserve an absolute control over their subjects, however far they may go. Nay more! few of our readers, perhaps, have noticed an advertisement, periodically recurring in the English newspapers, by virtue of which, such of the boys as fall within

the terms prescribed for the military conscription, are summoned back to their homes. It is then in the faculty of those petty despots to prevent the emigration of their deluded beggars, as the granting of passports is entirely among the powers they exercise at discretion. They are likewise at liberty to recall their subjects at a few days' notice; and they do not scruple to do so, whenever it suits their purpose, to increase their armies by the aid of such potent auxiliaries as these poor stunted organ-grinders. Their commissaries also, be it remembered, never hesitate to drive from their confines any stranger unable to produce ample proofs of his independent means of subsistence, so utter an abhorrence have they on their own part of the intrusion of indigent aliens. It is, therefore, practicable for the English government to advise its southern allies to issue orders to the effect that this traffic in white slaves may cease—it is even right, as it is easy, for England in the name of justice and humanity, if these little princes are not willing to accede to her just requests—to **MAKE** them!



# IRENE;

## A TALE OF CARBONARISM.

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### I.

#### THE VENDITA.

THE high dignitaries sat at their large wooden blocks: on these lay the crown of thorns, the nails, the cup, all the mystic emblems of the redemption of mankind. The tapers burnt dimly before the crucifix. The image of St. Theobald frowned grimly from the wall. The master of the ceremonies struck thrice with his axe on the massive desk before him. The masters sat on the right, the apprentices were ranged on the left, and the Grand Master was covered.

The latter was a priest, he was the Prior of the Benedictines at Modena, and the grand lodge, or *Alta Vendita*, was held in a gloomy cell under the subterranean vaults of his monastery.

Father Romualdo was a stern-looking man. There was in the marble brow, in the thin livid lips of the friar, as he sat there enthroned, a stedfast rigidity, a blank austerity, such as might well baffle the skill of the most searching eye. It seemed as if the facial nerves had been purposely severed, or bound, so as to deaden all sense, and cut off all communication between the inward and the outward man.

Father Romualdo was, in fact, but vaguely known in the world. Belonging to an order since time immemorial conspicuous for liberal tastes and classical learning, the Prior enjoyed the greatest reputation as a scholar within and without the walls of his convent. He was considered an ambitious man. He was called a hypocrite, an unbeliever, a fanatic, a voluptuary—inconsistent and contradictory charges. The fact is, that few

men could boast having obtained even the most transient insight into his thoughts. In the gayest circles in which the comparatively mild rules of his order occasionally allowed him to mingle, his appearance was an object of ill-disguised dread and aversion, and the most buoyant spirits sank helpless and lifeless, paralyzed by his forbidding appearance.

But the Carbonari knew, revered, and trusted him. With a priest's inquisitive sagacity, the wary monk had spied them; he had tracked them out from the very beginning of their operations. He had held out his hand, he had joined them; the ascendancy of his mighty intellect had raised him to the supreme dignities, and their mysterious rites were now celebrated under his presidency, within the walls of his cloistered residence, under the inviolable shade of the sanctuary.

It was in 1821, a year of gloom and consternation in Italy. The insurrections of Naples and Turin had been stifled in blood. The secret conspiracies of those two provinces were traced up

to the neighbouring states. Proscriptions commenced at Modena as well as at Milan, Florence, and Rome. Arrests and desertion thinned the Carbonari ranks, and the few who at the Prior's bidding met at the convent of St. Gervaso, bore on their pale countenances the marks of terror and dismay.

But Father Romualdo was calm and secure. His dark, steady eye rested successively on the face of every person assembled, and when at last he spoke, his unfaltering voice sounded as full, solemn, and commanding as it ever did from the pulpit when it denounced the wrath of Heaven against the crimes of mankind.

“Hear me, dear and good cousins! We are here assembled, perhaps for the last time. The good cause in which we enlisted succumbs under the strokes of resistless tyranny. Our bond of holy brotherhood is for the moment dissolved. Let every one provide for his safety; only, before we part—before base instinct of self-preservation estranges us from each other, we have a sacred, a

sad, a terrible duty to fulfil. Many of our good cousins have been thrown into the dungeons of the citadel. None of the remaining few ever seek their pillows without shuddering at the *reveille* that may await them on the morrow. Hitherto we were at a loss how to account for the suddenness of the enemy's movements, for the unerring aim with which the shafts of his vengeance were levelled at us. But now the source of our desolation is revealed. The author of our disasters is known. It is hard for me to avow it. It pains me more grievously than if I saw one half of our brethren ascending the scaffold. But God himself, whose crucified image stands before me, found a false friend among his chosen twelve. Even so we have a traitor amongst us. Vincenzo Besini—he who, only a fortnight ago, sat here, a brother, a master amongst the highest of us—Besini, it has been averred beyond the least shade of doubt—had repeated audiences of the Duke. Here is the evening Gazette reporting his appointment to the directorship of the police.”

This information occasioned a general movement of surprise.

“Brethren,” continued the formidable friar, “what say you?—shall we suffer this Judas to enjoy in peace the price of blood? You do not forget the words of the awful oath by which we are bound to our sect? Our dastardly betrayer himself is well aware of the retribution with which each of his associates has sworn to visit all apostacy. He has voluntarily joined us, voluntarily acknowledged the authority of our unrelenting jurisdiction, voluntarily entered into our mutual compact of self-defence, laid down his life as a pledge of his honour and truth. From the first moment of his cowardly defection he knew that the dagger stood lifted up against his perjured breast, and he only flattered himself that sheer terror or impotence would stay the avenging stroke. Now is the time for decision. A heartless renegade is selling us to a relentless tyrant. The word of arbitrary law hangs over our devoted heads. Vincenzo Besini holds our lives, and those of our

imprisoned brethren in his hands. Can he thus have our fate in his keeping and live? Again, refer to the words of our oath. What becomes of him that reveals our secret proceedings, and betrays his sacred engagement?"

"He dies!" cried more than one voice from the master's bench.

"You have said it," exclaimed the cowed president, solemnly. "His sentence is implied in the very words of our unalterable statutes. Yet if any of our good cousins can allege only one word in refutation, or even in extenuation of his guilt, we are prepared to hear him."

An ominous silence reigned over the awe-stricken assembly.

"Odoardo Besini, withdraw," said the grand master, turning towards a gray-haired, mild-looking man, seated on his right hand, at the head of the master's bench, "your feelings towards your elder brother disqualify you from sitting among his judges."

"I am a Carbonaro here, and no brother,"

answered the patriot, firmly. "I claim my right to vote with the rest of my cousins."

The secret suffrages were collected, and sentence of death was unanimously pronounced.

"By the terms of our regulations," said the president, "the judgment having emanated from the supreme council of the masters, the execution devolves upon some of the junior members of the community. Let such of the apprentices as feel inclined to volunteer their services for the good cause step forward."

The apprentices rose simultaneously, and crowded up to the grand master's chair. Lots were drawn, and the choice fell upon one Rodrigo Morandi.

This young Carbonaro answered but little to that dusky representation of an Italian hero with which the readers of English novels and annuals are generally familiarized. The purest Lombard blood flowed in his veins, the blood of that high-mettled Teutonic race which started from the left bank of the Elbe, on their way to the conquest



of Italy, at the epoch that their Saxon kinsmen abandoned their homes on the right shore of the same river, bound to the invasion of Britain.

Imagine a tall, commanding figure, a severe brow, a calm, intense look, a set of handsome, but, even in the prime of life, stern, hard-chiselled features. Never was there a more sublime personification of manly pride. He was scarcely in his twentieth year, but his face and figure had already received all the early development of a southern climate. The colouring of his cheeks was slightly bronzed, but the fair complexion of his pale forehead, his hands, and what was to be seen of his neck, could hardly be matched, even in England. Lip and chin, and all his face, were shaven bare and smooth, while his light hazel hair, sleek and glossy, rather effeminately parted on the forehead, fell with a graceful bend on his shoulders.

Of his eyes it was not easy to ascertain the real colour—rather inclined to grey than blue; the orbs were full, fresh, and wakeful, as if weariness

and sleep never weighed on their lids, they shone forth with a firm but vacant gaze, as if in pursuit of some unsubstantial object, far off, somewhere in endless space.

Rodrigo Morandi belonged to an ancient but decayed family. He was a medical student at the university. He studied long and deep. He was reserved in his manners and pensive, and, with the exception of very few intimate friends, he shunned the haunts and converse of men. He seldom spoke, and whenever he did, it was always in a concise, sententious, and almost caustic tone. He had been recently admitted among the junior members of the formidable brotherhood over which father Romualdo presided. The earnestness of his temperament, and the well-known warmth of his patriotism had won him an admittance among the apprentices even before he had attained the legal age which could entitle him to enter the lodge: so that he was, in fact, the very youngest man that was ever initiated into the mysteries of Carbonarism.

Some of his friends remonstrated against the im-

prudence of charging an inexperienced youth with a mission fraught with such difficulties and dangers. Two of the eldest apprentices, Zoccoli and Ponzoni, volunteered to take it upon themselves, but Morandi remained inflexible. He repeated, that since Providence had chosen him as an instrument of its eternal designs, it could not fail to support and strengthen him in the hour of trial.

We will spare our readers the description of the awful ceremonies by which the young candidate for homicide was prepared for his atrocious deed—the libations of human blood, the consecration of the avenging stiletto, the new and more appalling oaths, by which he devoted himself to the interests of his sect. The veil of mystery which hung over those clandestine proceedings has been long torn asunder, and the secret rites of the Carbonari have been found to differ rather in purpose than in form from those of the Free Masons, which are now, as every one knows, reduced to empty talk and substantial suppers.

## II.

## MURDER AND PATRIOTISM.

MAY the clemency of an all-righteous God look mercifully on human transgressions ! for, here we have a premeditated deed of bloodshed, an assassination undertaken in open defiance of all divine and human laws, by a youth than whom there seldom was a more upright and generous character, and in obedience to orders issued by a body of men to whom a whole town looked up as their best and wisest citizens.

How far the Prior's arguments may be considered sound and equitable—how far the concurrence of extraordinary circumstances may go to render murder an excusable, unavoidable, and even meritorious act, Heaven forbid that we should ever take upon ourselves to decide. Since the light of

the Gospel dawned upon the benighted earth, the exploits of Harmodius, Timoleon, Brutus, and other tyrannicides as well as suicides of antiquity, have been considered only as delusions of pagan heroism, and looked upon as anything but enviable or imitable examples.

In modern Italy the Pazzi, the Olgiati, the murderers of Alessandro de' Medici, Pier Luigi Farnese, and a hundred others, were either not actuated by the purest motives, or their justification rests exclusively on their success. William Tell is the only Christian hero whose premeditated act received the unqualified absolution of posterity; and, in his case, the unanswerable plea of self-defence has been, somewhat gratuitously, urged forward in his exculpation. The same argument operated with equal force in favour of the *vehmgerichte* of the Modenese Carbonari. With them also it was a case of *mors tua vita mea*, and if men were under any circumstances permitted to provide for their own safety by all the means in their power, we only wonder why the conspirators did

not aim their strokes higher, and attempt the life of the tyrant instead of that of his worthless favourite.

Heaven forbid, we repeat, that these pages should be construed into an apology for secret societies and treasonable conspiracies, or that we should be supposed to give our sanction to the opinions of rash patriots who would deal with a despot as with a wild beast, and crush a traitor as they would a snake. Political murders, as well as duels and wars, are incompatible with the meek spirit of Christianity.

It is, however, but too easy for those who are blessed with parliaments, juries, rights of petition, and unbounded freedom of opinion, to moralize on the excesses to which people deprived of any other means of redress may be driven by despair. We appeal to the intelligent traveller who has had leisure and inclination to look into the political organization of distracted Italy, whether under the infliction of some of the minor vexations of that vile police, he did not feel almost as dark a

Carbonaro as ever burnt charcoal on the Appennines, and whether, had it been in his power, he would not have helped to overthrow a state of things so much more degrading, so much more unsafe and lawless than the most riotous anarchy.

## III.

## LOVE AND MY NATIVE LAND.

ON the main balcony of one of the loftiest palaces in the *Piazza di Corte* there stood Irene Rangoni and Rodrigo Morandi. Irene was the youngest daughter of the noblest and wealthiest Modenese family, but notwithstanding their wide disparity of rank, the two young persons had been, on the plea of near relationship, brought up together with a degree of familiarity rare in Italy among the youth of different sex.

Irene was only a twelvemonth younger than her cousin. Congeniality of tastes and pursuits had, in their adolescence, made them indivisible. Irene was also a student. She possessed, in common with her cousin, that premature meditateness, that deep sensibility, which under powerful excitement



is so easily roused into dangerous enthusiasm, or deepened into wasting melancholy.

This fatal exuberance of acute and morbid feelings, preying rapidly on a constitution otherwise sound and healthful, is by no means uncommon in Italy.

The affections of Irene Rangoni were all centered on her wayward and unsettled cousin. Related to him in a degree which, in a Catholic country, allowed no warmer feelings, she fancied she loved him only as a brother. His eccentric habits, his pensive uncommunicative sternness, and even his occasional fits of irritability, kept on the stretch all the faculties of the companion of his juvenile studies, who, in her assiduous endeavours to please him, hardly thought all her boundless, woman-like devotion, commensurate with the happiness that the mere sight of his countenance conferred upon her.

His presence was warmth and sunshine to her heart. It is true that her cousin's mind had become, of late, a sealed book to her. It was evident that, however touched by her more than sisterly kindness, and willing to reciprocate it, he deemed her

too innocent and pure a being to be trusted with his secret and terrible intents. She perceived this—but that very inaccessibility, her very consciousness of unworthiness to commune with his vast and aspiring intellect increased the idolatrous veneration of the enthusiastic maiden, and gave her attachment a tinge of that vague, shrinking awe, which in those of her sex is very often blended with the most expansive affections.

For the last few weeks the terrors of distracted Carbonarism had estranged Morandi from her. The half-greeting, half-chiding tenderness of her beaming countenance, contrasted strangely with the abstract and ominous look of the designing conspirator. She followed him to the balcony, where he had stationed himself, with his face buried in his hands, gazing on the opposite façade of the ducal palace.

“ Step into my bower, good Rodrigo,” she said, gently laying hold of his arm, “ why would you tarry on this glaring balcony? Come, we must rehearse the parting scene between *Raimondo* and *Bianca*, in the ‘*Congiura de’ Pazzi*.’ ”

" We have had already too many rehearsals, my child; the day of performance is at hand."

" Why do you turn your eyes from your own Irene? Why do you look so intensely on yon marble palace? It is as hateful to me as to you! Have I not loathed tyranny ever since I began reading Alfieri with you? Have you not taught me how great, how glorious, how miserable is this Italy, which I learnt from you to call my country.—oh, rejoice with me, cousin! Next week my father takes us all to Scandiano. There is no court there, no duke, or any of his satellites. There are only our vine-clad hills, our pine-groves around, and God's own blue canopy of heaven above us."

" Tyranny, like the Divinity, is omnipresent."

" We will take our books, our drawings, our harp with us to the country. Cousin Rodrigo will join us. Oh, by the way, I believe I can sing you that patriotic air which my brother sent me from Naples,—come, it is a Carbonari song. I should be arrested, you know, if they heard me sing it. Therefore do I love to sing it."

As she said this the affectionate girl, adding a gentle violence to her words, pulled her cousin by the hem of his coat, endeavouring to draw him from the window. The coat burst open, and a dagger fell at her feet. It was the same weapon the young assassin had received from father Romualdo, at the Carbonari lodge on the previous evening. Morandi hastened to hide it by laying his right foot upon it.

"A stiletto!" exclaimed the terrified damsel. "Do you, Rodrigo Morandi—you, a scholar and a gentleman, wear a knife like every vulgar bravo who may need that treacherous instrument to settle his drunken brawls? That weapon for which our nation, you told me yourself, is branded by foreigners as a race of dastardly cut throats!"

"The sword is taken from us: the dagger is the slave's only resource."

"Give me that weapon. Some awful design is in your mind, and I must be blind not to read it in your countenance. Great God! Morandi, you are unwell! Cold drops are oozing from your

forehead. Your eyes seem ready to start from their sockets. Heavens! what terrific object is in sight? What are you staring so wildly at? Why, that is only the Signor Vincenzo Besini."

"The man I wanted."

## IV.

## THE SNAKE CRUSHED.

VINCENZO BESINI emerged from the lofty portico in front of the magnificent marble palace, built by the last princes of the declining house of Este. The peals of the *Ave Maria* had not yet announced the setting of the sun. It was broad daylight, and the Piazza di Corte, as well as the adjoining streets, were still swarming with people. Besini was walking leisurely home from the palace, where he had one of his daily conferences with the duke. He walked arm in arm with one of the minor commissaries of the police, all absorbed in deep conversation. His former friends stared at him as they passed, without answering his salutations. The people of the lowest classes gave way before

him, bowing in silence, and casting their eyes to the ground, then stopped to look after him, muttering a curse between their teeth. He wore on his breast the decoration with which his grateful sovereign had rewarded his treason. This Cavalier Besini, Director of the Police, and, in consequence of this dignity, Prime Minister of a state in which that body embraces all legislative and executive power, this wretched being who had bartered body and soul for these detested honours—was an old man with one foot in the grave. He was bald and thin, and had been long seen walking with an unsteady tread, as if bent by years and infirmities; but now he strove to raise himself to his full height, and returned the homage of the crowd with a haughty smile of condescension as a man who knew he owed those servile demonstrations to the dread he inspired, and rejoiced in the hatred of his fellow-beings.

“Look well to your business, Frega,” he whispered to his companion. “Take your smartest men with you, and cheer them with the prospect

of a handsome reward. Father Romualdo will be at his post, and the whole covey may be found snug in their nest."

"Leave it to me, my lord."

"Ay, ay, you are a jewel for such a job, His Royal Highness told me. He! he! he!" chuckled the old sinner, with a fiendish glee. "How foolish they all will look! I wish it were consistent with my dignity to head the expedition. I wish I could witness the blanched cheeks and the dropping jaw of that arch-fox of a priest.—A little management, as I said to His Highness, and we will outwit them. Those blunderers at Parma and Bologna have made a sad mess of it. They have shaken the charcoal-bag, raised a cloud of dust, and are only laughed at for their trouble. But we hold them. From the first to the last they are in our power. See if we let one slip through our fingers."

Thus conversing, the director and his subaltern officer had turned the corner of the Rangoni Palace. The last words had scarcely escaped Besini's lips,



when a man came rushing on the well-watched pair with the swiftness of lightning. The impetus of his onset threw the ill-balanced commissary flat to the ground. With his left hand the aggressor grasped the throat of the new minister, whilst with his right he buried a dagger in his bosom. A shriek was heard from one of the balconies of the Rangoni Palace, and a female form was seen falling insensible on the marble floor. Ere any one had so far recovered from his surprise as to be aware of what had happened, the assassin darted through the crowd, and was soon out of sight.

The unfortunate Minister of the Police (I leave surgeons to account for the fact as they can), stepped forward three or four paces, then turned round and stooped to help his companion, who lay still stunned and bewildered on the pavement.

"Look," said he, with great coldness, pointing to the handle of the murderous weapon that stood stuck upon his breast, close to the knightly ribbon, but from which not a drop of blood was

seen to trickle out. "Look how they have served me!"

The crowd gathered round; but the Director continued his walk without leaning on his friend, and refusing the assistance of the most officious bystanders. He yawned and stared, but neither staggered nor fainted.

"Let His Royal Highness look well to himself," said he. "Who ever heard of such an abominable trick? In full daylight too—and look! In sight of the Holy Virgin of the Seven Sorrows!—Jesus Maria!—Dr. Pilati," he added, turning to a surgeon he met on his homeward progress, "I am glad to see you. Here is a little job for you, you see. Oh! for a quarter of an hour's interview with His Highness!"

Thus he continued talking somewhat incoherently, but always with the greatest volubility, proceeding steadily till he reached the door of his house; his friend and the doctor alone following him up stairs. He threw himself on a sofa completely exhausted; his cheeks were deadly pale;

his eyes haggard and wild ; not a drop of blood issued from the wound, but, it was plain, death was busy at his heart.

The last wish of the dying wretch was complied with. Four Ducal Dragoons with drawn broadswords dispersed the crowd by which the street-door was besieged ; and behind them, alone, on foot, almost in immediate contact with the populace, arrived Francis IV., the Austrian heir of the House of Este, Duke of Modena.

This valiant, firm, enlightened, plausible prince, who, with a territory of a few hundred square miles, and somewhat less than half a million of subjects, with an army of twelve hundred infantry, and a park of four pieces of artillery, has bearded the most colossal powers of Europe, refused to acknowledge the King of the Barricades, and, by his exactions, virtually banished the English from his states—this sagacious despot, before whom the Modenese population (an anomaly to all the rest of Europe), melts and dwindles amidst the prosperity of flourishing peace—this consistent autocrat,

whom the French newspapers magnify into "*le Tibère*," or "*le Néron de l'Italie*," has given flagrant proofs of personal intrepidity—whenever he perceived that such exhibitions could be ventured upon with impunity.

Pale as death, but erect and stately, advanced the heroic Duke in the rear of four of his blood-thirsty thief-takers, followed by four more of the same honourable corps, rolling his red eyes in all directions, his hand ostentatiously resting on the hilt of his sword. He knew very well that the conspirators, whoever they might be, after striking so desperate a blow, were not likely to tarry on the spot; so, with an air of king-like assurance, he darted angry glances around, as if hurling defiance at the trembling, crouching rabble, who had been schooled to subjection by several years of summary execution, and stopped on the threshold of the house of death, as if for a final bravado, ere he hastened to receive the last breath of his devoted servitor.

At the very moment the Duke entered the apart-

ment, the surgeon made the attempt to remove the weapon from the breast of his patient. A hollow gurgling sound ensued. Besini started from his couch with a convulsive gasp; he pressed both his hands on his chest, and shrieked with a terrific voice—

“Confession! confession! God has reached me!”

Surgeons and priests gave way before the redoubted sovereign. He was left alone with the wretched Director for less than a minute, when he rang the bell and summoned back the attendants. The features of Besini were distorted by a ghastly smile, and he expired without uttering another word. A squadron of cavalry and the Duke's carriage arrived at the door. Francis IV. paused for a second on the senseless clay before him, and laying his hand on the crucifix a priest had left on the pillow, he muttered audibly—

“Were it to cost me one-half of my states, Besini, God is my witness, thou shalt be avenged.”

## V.

## THE WORM THAT NEVER DIES.

Meanwhile the idlers of the "Caffé delle Belle Arti" were looking from behind the shop-window at the bustling crowd.

"Something dreadful has happened," said Libérati, a young lawyer of quiet, indolent habits. "Ho!—one of you go and see what the deuce is the matter there. But stay—here comes Morandi—Well, my boy, what's the news?"

Morandi came down the street where the tumult seemed to be at its height.

"I do not know—I never stopped to inquire. Some . . . . murder, I suppose."

No one asked any further. The cry, "Murder,"

was at that epoch, and in some parts of Italy is still too common to excite any considerable alarm.

"*Hanno ammazzato uno!*" say the gaping crowd at Florence or in Rome, and the bell is rung, the brothers of the *misericordia* run to the spot, and it is nobody else's business to meddle with it.

"What is the matter with you, Morandi? You look pale," inquired his friend.

"Nothing in the world," replied Morandi, with great firmness. "That odious crowd!—Here, boy, bring me lemonade—And, by-the-bye, Liberati, do you know you owe me a *revanche* at chess? Come, the chess-board awaits us."

He sipped his lemonade, played his game, and beat his antagonist.

He was then aged nineteen!

On the morning, Doctor Pasquali, professor of *medicina legale*, was invited to proceed to an official visit, and to make what is there called "*l'autopsia del cadavere*." He was followed by some

of his pupils at the university. Morandi among the number.

"Young gentlemen," said the professor, accurately wiping his spectacles with a cambric pocket-handkerchief. (Italian doctors are remarkably nice in their habits.) "Young gentlemen, you see, a wound has been here inflicted in the thoracic region by a sharp instrument, most likely a dagger or *stiletto*, with one of those thin triangular blades, a hurt from which is usually attended with instantaneous death."

"So it appears," said Morandi, on whom the eye of the good professor happened to rest.

"There has been, as you perceive," continued the anatomist, "scarcely any effusion of blood. This is one of those wounds which are said to bleed inwardly; for the dagger having been left in the body, in consequence also of the exiguity of the blade, the blood bursting from the broken vessels, found every outlet obstructed, and invaded the cavity of the lungs, producing immediate suffocation."



"Quite plain," echoed the pupils.

"Morandi," pursued the professor, "hand me that *specillum*, or rather, since you are more at hand, oblige me by sounding the depth of the wound. There, gently, do not force your instrument in, but follow the aperture in its natural course."

"Five and a half inches, sir," said Morandi, extracting the long blunted probe, dripping with clotted gore. "It is evident the assassin took a good aim, and struck to the heart's core."

And the companion of the dead man, that Commissary Frega, whom Morandi had knocked down by the side of his victim, was present all the time, acting coroner for the occasion!

We must draw a curtain over the further proceedings of the learned member of the faculty, and his hopeful pupils, lest the reader should sicken at it. Suffice it to say, that Morandi was left alone to perform the last offices to the dissected body—alone in the chamber of death—alone with his victim.

And yet this young man, who, acting under the

influence of a false and guilty principle, but too fatally in consonance with what he considered a patriotic duty, had evinced such a rare firmness and inconceivable cold blood, who, in order to screen himself from suspicion, had lingered on the scene of his misdeed, steeling his nerves to such a tremendous ordeal—had, however, received a shock from which, in after life, he never recovered.

Like his victim's wound, the impression of that deed of blood worked inwardly. Like the Spartan youth, he hugged his remorse to his bosom. His countenance never by the slightest twitch, by the faintest flush, betrayed the agony of his soul; but stifled conscience had fastened its fangs on his heart, and preyed on his vitals. Sleep had deserted his couch. He started up in the dark in anguish and terror: he was heard at dead of night gnashing and howling; his ravings increased to such an extent, that, dreading lest remorse should betray him in his fearful slumbers, two months after the calamitous occurrence, and before the suspicions of the police had in any manner lighted upon him,

he asked and obtained his passport, and put the Alps and the sea between him and the scene of his guilt.

An unforeseen catastrophe came to aggravate the misery of the repentant murderer. Out of a large crowd who witnessed Besini's death, only one person could be at no loss as to the identity of his aggressor. Irene Rangoni, from whose side Morandi had torn himself, as he pounced like a hawk on his victim, hurried from balcony to balcony, followed him with her eye, breathless with anxious terror. She saw him overtake the doomed minister, and fall upon him with a desperate plunge. She beheld the gleaming blade, she heard the hollow sound of the deadly thrust. She uttered a piercing shriek, and unheeded for many hours, she lay lifeless on the balcony. Her desolate parents brought her unconscious to her apartment, and when they at last succeeded to rouse her from her long entrancement, she awoke in their arms—a maniac!

Far from her, far from home, travelled, mean-

while, the unfortunate Morandi. How wide and far did he roam in his anxiety to fly from himself! What did he leave unachieved that could, in any degree, atone for the blood that rose in judgment against him. In Spain, in Greece, in South America, wherever a revolutionary standard was raised, the noble youth hastened, the sworn champion of freedom. Always in the foremost ranks, in the forlorn hopes, he fought like a man courting death for its own sake. But where he sought danger, he only found glory; from the wastes of Columbia to the shores of the Morea, his name was repeated with enthusiasm, and especially after Missolonghi, the gratitude of the Greeks knew no limits. They loaded him with honours, they spared nothing that could bind the Modenese hero to his adopted country.

Meanwhile, after the subsiding of the first terrors, Besini's murder had filled Modena with a joy that no threat of tyranny could subdue. Faithful to his engagement, the Duke looked round for a proper object on whom to glut his vengeful ire. Father

Romualdo and the two rash youths, Ponzoni and Zoccoli, were arrested on the same evening at St. Gervaso's monastery. They were brought before a secret commission. The prior was rather vaguely declared guilty of high treason, and sentenced to death. The intercession in his favour of all the monks of his order, and of the pope himself, was received with silent contempt. The thumb and finger of his right hand, which had handled the consecrated host, were consumed by expiatory fire; and after similar rites and forms of excommunication, the fearless priest suffered a felon's death on the scaffold.

The two younger criminals were thrown into a prison, from which it was the Duke's intention they should never be liberated. Their animosity against the late President of the Police, pointed them out as the probable authors of a murder of which the treacherous Prior was believed to be the instigator. In vain they both proved by an *alibi* their innocence. In vain did Morandi, who was at the time in Spain, write to the Duke, assuring him

that he, and he alone, was the author of the crime. In vain were the prisoners acquitted even by the mercenary tribunal appointed to decide their fate. The Duke's answer was, that the evidence of an absentee was considered of no avail ; the exile was invited to appear in person to give satisfactory proof of his self-criminating assertions, and in the interim the prisoners were sent back to jail—at the disposal of the police.

More than eight years did those unfortunate men continue in this cruel suspense, till at last the iron doors of their cells were opened by the events of 1831. They then took refuge in France, where they are living still, helpless emigrants, Ponzoni well-nigh deprived of eye sight, Zoccoli labouring under a periodical mental alienation. Both of them bear witness to a long infliction of torture, by the side of which even the melancholy recitals of Pellico and Andryane sink into utter insignificance.

They both firmly state that slow poison, especially an infusion of *belladonna*, or night-shade, was

administered to them, with a view to force a confession from their impaired faculties and shattered minds. They affirm that terrific apparitions and appalling monsters were resorted to, to enfeeble their understanding by constant agitation and sleeplessness. Perhaps these terrors may be partly ascribed to the effects of diseased imagination; but that one of them left the Duke's prisons nearly blind, and the other more than half insane, is no matter of doubt.

Few persons abroad are well acquainted with the particulars of the revolution of central Italy in 1831. Aware that a conspiracy was brewing in the very heart of his little metropolis, the little Duke of Modena put himself at the head of his little army, and, after giving the rebels a battle, in which he took several prisoners, he deemed it expedient to fly beyond the Po, into the states of his mighty cousin of Austria. From the 3rd of February to the 5th of March, of that auspicious year, the Modenese were free. On the first report of a national movement, Morandi sailed from

Navarino to Rimini, whence he proceeded to Modena.

The thunders of artillery by which the Duke opened his bombardment of the house of the ill-fated *Ciro Menotti*, on the 3rd of February, aroused from the long lethargy in which she had lain during nine years of gloomy confinement, the desolate *Irene Rangoni*. The shouts of "VIVA LA LIBERTÀ!" VIVA L'ITALIA!" which soon after the tyrant's flight resounded throughout the enfranchised city, seemed to bring a faint gleam of consciousness on the vacant eyes of the demented sufferer. She expressed a wish to attend a national fête given a few nights afterwards at the theatre. She shed a flood of tears as the bold youth of the newly-enlisted national guards waved their tri-coloured standard over her wan, emaciated, terror-haunted head. More calm and serene than she had been seen for many years, she was led back to her father's home. She sat up on her bed attempting to read some of her cousin's letters, which had been lying on her table unheeded during the long wandering of her intellect.



Presently there was more greeting and shouting in the street below. There was a loud summons at the palace-door—she recognised the familiar foot-tread—she rushed from her chamber.

“He is come!” she screamed, and fainted in the arms of Morandi.

## VI.

ADIEU, MY NATIVE LAND, ADIEU!

ALAS! the Jubilee of 1831, was but of short duration. After a few days' repose, the hero of Missolonghi was sent at the head of a band of national militia, to protect the threatened boundaries. In a hot engagement at Novi, he repulsed the Duke's battalions, who marched as the vanguard of a formidable Austrian division. But even this first success failed to breathe spirit into the hearts of the timid old men, who had been placed at the head of the insurrectional government. With the few young volunteers, who had not despaired of the cause of their country, Morandi joined General Zucchi at Bologna, and after the combat and disastrous retreat of Rimini, he embarked with some of the most conspicuous patriots.

at Ancona, whence the vessel he sailed in having fallen in with Austrian cruisers, he was with his friends, conveyed to Venice, and there thrown into the prisons of the ancient inquisition of state.

But even in that extremity his brave heart did not quail within him. The news of his arrest spread consternation through Italy. The exulting Duke of Modena had obtained from the Lombardo-Venetian government the surrender of his prisoner. How many of his victims would he not cheerfully have given up to secure in his clutches the murderer of his minion!

But it was fated otherwise. By what contrivance the hundred-eyed vigilance of the Austrian keeper was baffled,—by what unprecedented good luck the bolts and bars of those formidable *Piombi* and *Pozzi* were burst open, never was ascertained. It was only whispered that with the aid of a fair maiden in a Grecian costume, Morandi scaled the walls of his prison with that unmatched agility for which he was renowned, found shelter in the house of the English Consul for a few hours—the French

*chargé d'affaires* having basely shut his door against him—went through several disguises, so as to elude the search of his pursuers, rowed to the main land in the garb of a gondolier, and travelling across Lombardy alone on foot, without money or passport, he never stopped till he saw himself in perfect security in the land of the Grisons. His deliverance was a theme of universal rejoicing throughout Italy.

A few months afterwards he was again settled at Corfu, where he was joined by the unknown damsel who had so powerfully contributed to his rescue. The Grecian girl was no other than Irene Rangoni.

MARIA STELLA;  
A SMUGGLER'S TALE.

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I.

VESPERS IN THE COUNTRY.

It was Sunday afternoon, the hour of Vespers at Bedonia, in the Val-di-Taro. The service had already commenced, and not a soul was to be seen out of church. A stream of female voices gushed out of the open windows of the choir. Outside, not a sound, not a living object astir. It was a scene of ineffable calmness and silence. Only near the portals, an instrument of destruction was leaning against the wall—it was the redoubted carabin of Paul Moro, the last of the bandits of the Appenines.

Religion in the country is a matter widely different from what it appears to foreign travellers in most of the Italian cities. In town the Italians have hardly any preaching at all, except in Lent, and even in that season attendance on sermons is not among the absolute commandments of the Church. High mass is only continued for the edification of a few pious old ladies, and for the amusement of curious English travellers. But for the generality of the faithful, every priest celebrates a daily mass, and as priests are tolerably numerous, you may perform your Christian duty at any hour of the day, having only to choose between the old parson, who blunders through the service in an hour, and the young chaplain who glides through it in ten minutes.

Accordingly before daybreak, before the opening of the church, a half drowsy crowd is besieging the door, coughing, stamping, storming for admittance. The doors are thrown open. Enter traveller and his valise, driver and his whip, housemaid and her basket, sportsman and his hound—

supposing him to be civil enough to have left his gun at the entrance. Two meagre candles are lighted, a huge folio is open, some buzzing prayers are muttered, and thus ends what is called, "*La Messa degli Affrettati*."

Exactly at noon, all the ladies' toilets being over, all the new suits of clothes being donned, a large concourse of fine people repair to their favourite chapel—generally a small, insignificant building, but from that very cause, secure from vulgar intrusion. The ladies kneel at random on low benches, or are helped to chairs by their cavaliers. These latter stand at the extremity of the nave, a various, gaudy, ever-fluctuating group, bearing some resemblance to the loungers of Fop Alley at the Opera House—talking, and laughing, and from their eye-glasses darting death at the beauties on the right and left. In the interior of a small screened altar, something is going on which nobody sees or hears, and which may be Latin, or Greek, prayers or curses, for ought any body cares. When that something is over, off walks

the male part of the audience, and ranges itself in two long rows at the church-door, leaving a narrow avenue for the passage of the females, who appear radiant, edified, santified, ready for the promenade. This is the fashionable mass, called "*La messa dei Belli.*"

Last of all the tradesman, who has been at work behind the half-closed shutters of his shop, to supply the luxuries of the wealthy, is hurried by the last peals of the bell to the nearest church, where he arrives in time to get his two-thirds of a mass celebrated for the accommodation of the people of his class, and which is called "*La Messa degli Ostinati.*"

In the afternoon, all that the town possesses of proud steeds and gilt chariots, is prancing and glancing up and down the Corso; in the evening the cafés are dazzling with glaring lamps, the theatres are trembling with intoxicating music, the saloons are glowing with social entertainments.

Such is the Sabbath in town. In the country, in many a sequestered village of the Lombard



plain, in many a parish of the remotest Appennine—nowhere more so than in the unexplored district into which we purpose to introduce our readers—is easily found as true, as pure, as ignorant a piety as could be in the times of the earliest Christianity. The manners of those people are stationary, and know no progress either for good or evil. It is still, therefore, the fashion among them to keep holy the seventh day. No distance, no hardship of road or weather, were ever known to deter the Lombard peasant from his devotional duties. In the morning a long mass, with evangelical preaching; in the evening psalms, hymns, and the Blessing of the Host.

The church services are not, however, so long, that before and after them, time may not be left for enjoyment. In the morning there are the sports of the wood; in the afternoon athletic exercises; in the evening, the whole village assemble, in winter in a large parlour, in summer on the threshing-floor by moonlight—and there, with the music of self-taught fiddlers and pipers, seniors

and matrons sitting gravely around, they appoint managers and partners, and with jigs, tarantellas, furlanas, and a variety of dances and country-dances, they go on till they feel completely rested and refreshed for the toil of the morrow. In all these sports the pastor is expected to join, and no joy is complete unless he is there to take his share.

I must confess I have never seen an Italian minister dance, though a Spanish padre I have, but I have seen more than one on the Appennines, rising very early with a gay company, on a bright Sunday morning, loading and shouldering his gun, and hallooing after his hounds, shooting his hare with tolerable skill, and remarkable good luck, and at the ringing of the bell hurry back to the parsonage at full gallop, wash his bloody hands at the vestry, put on in great confusion his surplice, his gown, the hundred paraphernalia of his Levitical attire, and ascend to the altar, as venerable in the eyes of his flock and fellow-hunters, as holy and infallible as ever.

The bandit himself, as we have seen, with a reward on his head, does not believe himself exempt from attending church-service, and the carabine of Paul Moro, clearly announced the presence of its owner among the pious flock of the parish of Bedonia.

## II.

## SMUGGLER'S LIFE.

ITALY has not, nor indeed Europe out of Switzerland, a region of more romantic mountain scenery than this same Val-di-Taro, in the Parmesan Appennine, and it is, perhaps, from the church-door of Bedonia, that its beauties are viewed to the greatest advantage. The Taro, the mightiest of Italian torrents, there, almost at its source rolls full and wide, several hundred fathoms below, bounding from rock to rock in a hundred cascades. In front, behind, on all sides, spreads its immense valley, imperceptibly sloping downwards, an endless succession of wild, dreary scenery, of fields, heaths, forests, and cliffs, with

towns and hamlets scattered at various intervals; with steeples of convents, ruins of castles—a world of numberless objects on a measureless space. On the right, some twenty miles off, the river hides its sources in the crest of the Appennine, which bending boldly to the south-west, rises gradually up to the stupendous heights that encircle the Holy Lake, which seen as they are from Bedonia, have the appearance of an immense eagle, stooping on his eyrie, and slowly unfolding his mighty pinions in the act of winging its flight. Beneath are the passes of La Cisa, and further, a long range of impervious crags, the coasts of Berceto and Cassio, down to Pietra Nera, behind which glimmers the light, ocean-like haze, eternally lingering on the Lombard plain.

Nowhere, perhaps, not even in Abruzzo, or Calabria, are to be found such a tall, handsome, active family of men as in the district we have attempted to describe.

The mountaineers of the upper districts of the Val-di-Taro, no matter what may otherwise be

the condition of Italy—are an independent race. They have always been, they are still virtually at war against all governments; and gendarmes, gaugers, or excisemen, seldom venture with impunity within the stronghold of their mountain fastnesses. Too poor for taxation, too testy and stubborn for military service, the government of Parma would hardly deem it worth while to interfere with them in any manner, and would gladly leave them to the rule of their priests, and their traditional, clan-like, social compact, were it not for the alarming extent to which they carry on their contraband trade.

Placed on the confines between the Tuscan, Sardinian, Modenese, Parmesan, and Lucchese states, every highlander of that district is at heart a smuggler. Naturally a people of the most peaceable disposition, frank, patriarchial, hospitable, as the Arabs of the desert, they are only induced to take arms for the vindication of what they consider their inalienable right of free trade. The Italian governments have in their improvidence

laid the heaviest duties on salt, tobacco, gunpowder, and other articles of the same description, and raised toll-gates and custom-offices at every corner of their Lilliputian states. To evade the exactions, and to baffle the vigilance of the officers, to convey the forbidden articles from one state to another, to counteract the mean spirit of monopoly on the part of the governments, and establish a kind of unlawful Zollverein throughout the country, is the main occupation, the dearest object, the pride of the Val-tarese. Whoever defrauds the revenue by clandestine smuggling is held a clever man and a worthy one; but whoever carries on the contraband in full daylight, by main force, in the very teeth of armed authority, is looked upon as a hero.

Of this latter description there never had been, from time immemorial, a more daring pattern than the one who was now attending Vespers in the Parish Church at Bedonia.

Paul Moro was notorious throughout central Italy. He owned a score of mules of the best

Genoese breed. A hundred mountaineers were ever ready at his beck to join his band for any desperate enterprise. He entertained a wide correspondence with masters of smuggling vessels in Corsica and Port Mahon. At the head of his trusty outlaws, he would ride on a fine moonlight night to some desert spot on the Riviera of Genoa. Bales from Havannah or Virginia would pass from the hold of a tempest-tossed schooner to the backs of his sure-footed cattle. Then making straight for La Cisa, or Mount Cento Croci, the mighty caravan travelled day and night, without intermission, on the main road, announced at a considerable distance by the hundred bells jingling at the necks of its gaily-caparisoned mules ; till on its arrival at the toll-house on the borders, the reckless chieftain would march forward alone, and knocking lustily at the bolted door with the butt-end of his rifle, tauntingly call out to the trembling gauger within to come out and smoke one of his best Havannahs with him.

Strong bodies of gendarmes, and even detach-



ments of regular soldiery, had been posted at those often violated stations. Ambush and military stratagem had been resorted to. Combined manœuvres had been planned by the officers of different governments to circumvent and surprise the lawless band in its roving expeditions. The consequences had been bloody affrays, from which the contrabandist had invariably come off with signal success. His perfect knowledge of every inch of ground, his cool intrepidity, the consummate discipline in which men and beasts in his suite were trained, and the unerring aim of his rifle, enabled him to withstand the attack of widely superior forces. Entrenched behind their heavy laden mules, the smugglers could at any time improvise a fortified camp, even where the bare rocks, or the barren heath, offered no better shelter; and there was no instance on record of any of the band, dead or alive, or of any part of the cargo being suffered to fall into the hands of the enemy. By degrees, the suddenness of his movements, the impetuosity of his onset, and the

ruthlessness of his executions (for no quarter was given on the battle-field), had completely demoralized all his opponents, and the name alone of Paul Moro had power to disband a whole regiment in sheer panic consternation.

It must not, however, be supposed that personal bravery or strategic abilities, could alone have raised him to such a formidable extent of power. The secret of his long career of success lay in the popularity of his character and pursuits. In a land of smugglers he was the king of smugglers. He was a personification of the spirit of the wild population among whom lay the scene of his exploits. He was the life and soul of that "free trade" by which alone Val-di-Taro could flourish and thrive. No one had ever carried it on with such open defiance, with such enlarged views, with such systematic perseverance, with such constant prosperity. Every man felt that contraband had been nothing before him, and no one could say what it might become without him.

Every inhabitant of the district, therefore,

watched over the life of Paul Moro with all the zeal and activity of self-preservation. Every herdsman on the hills, every fisher in the streams, would have walked a hundred miles to convey him timely information of the presence of an enemy; every labourer in the field, every charcoal-burner in the woods, would have forsworn himself a thousand times to mislead and bewilder his pursuers. A party of Red Indians on their war-path do not display half the inventive powers employed by those mountaineers to secure their champion against any chance of surprise. Flags by day, fires by night, broken twigs in the forest, signals and sounds without number, constituted the language by which those volunteering spies and auxiliaries communicated with the band on every stage of its march. The whole region, indeed, seemed organised into a kind of Providence hovering with parental solicitude on the progress of its venturous children, so readily and so seasonably every crag and thicket seemed to produce a bare-footed messenger, breathless with

the momentous tidings it was his good fortune to bear.

So much for the smuggler on his campaigns. At home he could be under no apprehension of danger. His house, his native village, the whole territory for twenty miles around was inviolable land of refuge. Bailiffs and gendarmes trod upon it as on a smouldering volcano. No sooner had any of these worthies set his foot on that dreaded territory, than he felt nearly as comfortable as Damocles under Dionysius' sword. He met, indeed, with no show of hostility, no insult was offered him,—nay, so long as he evinced no unfriendly disposition, the highlander's hospitality was bountifully extended to him. Only all his steps were numbered, his movements closely followed, and at the slightest alarm the very ground on which he stood would have yawned under him ; and his annihilation would be so certain and sudden, that his fate would remain a mystery to the end of time.

It was long, however, since any such event had

occurred. It was long since any attempt had been made at an invasion of that privileged district. Government had long since been deterred from any interference with those unsophisticated children of nature, and the officers of justice, satisfied with an occasional ride through the valley, intended, as it were, for a vain assertion of nominal sovereignty, had long been accustomed to look on those sequestered villages as placed beyond the limits of their actual jurisdiction.

It was then rather as an ornament than for any expectation of its being pressed into service, that Paul Moro's carabine was left in waiting at the church door of Bedonia. Indeed, were even an assault meditated in any other part of the country, against any malefactor, the sacredness of the house of worship would, in any instance, screen him from danger; the women and children, and the very parish priest himself would, under such circumstances, turn out and fight for his defence.

The carabine, however, was there. That weapon had its ample share of its owner's reputation.

It was a long-barrelled, silver-mounted rifle, the like of which is not easily to be met with in the civilised world. The Moors of Abd-El-Kader and the Guerrilleros of Cabrera might be so equipped for war; but in any other country, old-fashioned instruments like that are laid down as mere curiosities of ancient armoury. Paul Moro would not have exchanged his rifle against the best of Manton's master-pieces. The barrel bore the name of its maker, *Lazzarino Cominazzo*, an armourer who flourished in Italy long before the renowned Spanish foundries attained their ascendancy. It was soft and smooth as velvet, and it seemed as if time and rust could never impair its rich brown, or affect the rings of its snake-like damaskeening. The stock, or at least its curious inlayings, were of more recent workmanship—most probably renewed according to the taste of its successive owners, the names of several of which were engraved on silver plates near the lock. The fame of all those owners lived in the wildest traditions of the country, and in the hands of each of them,

as well as in those of its present possessor, "*La Lazzarina*," as the rifle was called, had performed such prodigies, as could hardly be expected of a barrel merely cast in mortal forges, and tempered by human contrivance.

## III.

## RUSTIC PHILANDERING.

MEANWHILE, the elevation of the Host had closed the ceremonies of the evening service. As the last tinkling of the bell died off, a faint rush was heard announcing the rising of the congregation from their kneeling posture. Presently, bare-headed, silent, and with downcast eyes, they began to issue from the church, and after crossing the little church-yard, they all heaved a sigh, on finding themselves in the open air, as if glad to be relieved from the long constraint of overwrought devotion. The old people tarried awhile on the threshold to escort their beloved pastor to his dwelling, but the more impatient members of the new generation



filed off in a bustle, and paired off in different directions, engaged in genial conversation.

It must be observed, that amongst the rural population of Italy, where primitive manners to a great extent prevail, the Sunday is a day set apart for amorous, no less than for religious, purposes. Love and piety are so closely connected in that country, that ever since the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio, connubial transactions were wont to begin where they ought to finish—in a church. Even at the present day, in the country, the companion a swain chooses for a walk home after Vespers, is understood to be his intended partner for life. All affectionate intercourse between rustic lovers is limited to that day and that hour. Engaged in their laborious pursuits, they have, in week days, hardly leisure to acknowledge each other's presence, when meeting, by a hasty good morning; but the seventh day is sacred to the interchange of soft feelings. The church-door is a universal trysting-place. Parents and guardians never presume to interfere with acquaintances contracted under its

sacred auspices. Such a system of courtship, of course, precludes all possibility of secrecy. Indeed, the Italians—I mean the people of the old school—do not admit of the co-existence of love and mystery. Two walks home from Vespers with the same girl on successive Sundays, and you are booked for life.

Paul Moro was among the first to leave the church; he shouldered his piece with unaffected carelessness, and a few steps brought him by the side of the loveliest creature in Val-di-Taro.

They were a remarkable pair, and formed rather a pleasing contrast. The contrabandist was tall, dark, athletic. He was in his thirtieth year; the hue of exuberant health glowed on his bronzed cheek. No trace was on his look of the violent life he led. He had a manly, open, and cheerful countenance, expressive of all that gentleness and benevolence which is inseparable from genuine valour.

His companion had the complexion of an angel; somewhat pale, perhaps, but dazzlingly fair. Her

eyes were deep blue, and locks of the purest gold fell on a neck and shoulders of unblemished whiteness. She had an exquisite cast of features, animated by an expression of consummate archness. Her eyes beamed with an intelligence and energy which might appear somewhat premature and unfeminine. She was aged eighteen, and her name was Maria Stella.

There was an awful story connected with the birth of that singular girl. Her mother, a milkmaid of the neighbourhood of Borgotaro, had fallen in with a party of marauders from some of the invading armies of the allies in 1814; whether Cossacs or Croats, it was never satisfactorily ascertained. She remained with them three days, after which she succeeded in effecting her escape. She repaired to her mother's home, haggard, dishevelled, in a state of raving insanity; and continued a helpless maniac for nine months, at the end of which period she was delivered of a daughter, and died in giving her birth. The child was christened Maria Stella.

The miserable orphan was brought up by her grandmother, an indigent widow, who was her nearest relative. In her infancy, Maria Stella was removed to Bedonia, where she had grown up unconscious of her origin. Her aged relative and guardian had done all in her power to spoil her. Indulged in all her childish whims, and early made aware of the charms of her person, she had become as arrant a coquette as those innocent mountains had ever beheld. Paul Moro, to whose liberalities her grandmother was indebted for her subsistence, had centered all his thoughts on that blooming girl. He was not, indeed, blind to the waywardness and wantonness of her disposition; but he attributed it to the natural buoyancy of her age. In his native honesty and singlemindedness the good contrabandist was far from penetrating to the depth, and estimating to its full extent a character which seemed, in fact, as yet hardly developed, and which was too easily concealed under the appearances of girlish petulance and self-will.

## IV.

## SAMPSON AND DALILAH.

"It is a lovely evening," observed Maria Stella, as she drew down her *veletta* on her brow,\* and spread her rustic fan to screen her face from the rays of the setting sun, well knowing at what a high premium her snow-white complexion was in that southern climate; "we will have a stroll on the Pelpi, and come back by moonlight."

"And what," asked Paul, "is to become of your grandma' all the while?"

"Oh, Nonna knows very well how to take care

\* A picturesque head-gear used by the peasant girls in several mountainous districts in Italy, and consisting of a square top laid obliquely on the crown of the head, with wide folds falling gracefully on both sides and behind.

of herself," said the girl, pettishly. "She will be telling her beads till bedtime. Amusing, is it not? I wish you would go and keep her company. I can find my way very well without you—and, by-the-bye, you are not going to take that rusty old scare-crow with you," she said, tapping contemptuously with her fan on the barrel of the rifle, till it rang again like a silver bell.

"Why," said Paul, "I never knew you object to Lazzarina before."

"But I tell you I won't have it:" insisted the spoiled beauty; then pointing to a countryman that met them on the road—"there comes Bonagiunta, the cowherd, in good time," she said. "Trust it with him. Now then, make up your mind: you part with your gun, or you part with me."

"Be on your guard, Paul Moro," whispered the rustic, walking up to the contrabandist. "I have just come from Compiano. The garrison has received a reinforcement of dragoons from Borgotaro. Captain Scotti is with them. Be on the look out, I tell ye. Mark my words, they are after no good."

"The dragoons are loth to cross my path, Bonagiunta," said Paul, coolly. "As for Captain Scotti, there are old scores to settle between us. I have spared him twice. It is for him to beware.—But what ails thee, wench?" he said, turning suddenly to Maria Stella, "You look pale; fear not, my child, they will not interfere with us: and if they do, why Lazzarina is a friend in need. Now, you see, we can't very well dispense with it."

The girl bit her lips. The two betrothed continued their walk, the smuggler glancing occasionally at the road before him, the girl with her eyes on the ground; both silent. The path wound athwart the Pelpi, a vast extent of meagre pasture ground, sloping boldly to the river, all bare and bleak, without one bush to break its monotonous nudity. After an extent of above three miles, the coast broke into a narrow glen, beyond which there arose a lofty forest of old chesnut trees, spreading on a wide extent of land as far as the ancient fortress of Compiano. Here was the foremost station of

civilised life. That castle, which was also a prison of state, was tenanted by a thin garrison, occasionally strengthened by a body of gendarmes, or as they are there named, dragoons. Further down the broad valley is situated the town of Borgotaro, the little metropolis of the whole district. In the centre of the above-mentioned glen, and about half-way between Compiano and the village of Bedonia, embosomed in a cluster of luxuriant trees, was a chapel dedicated to St. Mary. The shrine stood still and solitary, venerable with age, awful with its unbroken silence and gloom.

By the time the two lovers had arrived in sight of the chapel, the girl had rallied her spirit, damped, as her lover thought, by the announcement of danger, however remote; she walked by the side of her protector, skipping and bounding like a very child, railing and teasing him in her desultory conversation.

“ But, my dear child—” remonstrated Paul.

“ But, dear papa, this evening I am in the hu-



mour for a very, very long walk ; we will go, at least, as far as St. Mary's."

" But, child," insisted the contrabandist, "you'll hardly be back at midnight."

" Well, and what of it ? Are you afraid of being with me alone in the dark, or—on my word, I believe you are afraid of ghosts : they do say, indeed, the old chapel is haunted."

" Afraid ?" said Paul, without swaggering, " I should be sorry to believe that I am afraid of any man, alive or dead."

" You do believe in ghosts, though ?"

" And why should I not?" replied the brave man, in the simplicity of his heart. " Am I not a man and a Christian ? Is not the soul immortal and God omnipotent ? But I fear them not ; an uneasy conscience needs alone fear them. I never harmed any living being. I am a quiet man, and follow a peaceful trade. If an evil-minded gauger chooses to act the part of the highway robber, and cross an honest muleteer on his path, why, his blood be on his head ! It grieves me, though, to hear

you trifling with matters connected with another world. The books they gave you at Borgotaro—I never looked into them—I am a poor, ignorant mountaineer—but I fear they can do you no good. There are men who study till they learn to fear neither God nor devil, and—”

“There now,” interrupted Stella, “what a good parson you’d make!”

“I do not like your books,” continued Paul Moro, with rising warmth, “and I do not like the company you frequent at Borgotaro. It was ill-advised of your grandmother to allow you to go alone to that idle town; had I been in the way, this should never have been. We have heard of your fine doings there. You have no regard for me, Stella, or you would not forget yourself so far as to be seen dancing and flirting with Captain Scotti, or any other thief-taker with epaulets like him.”

Again the girl turned pale; but, immediately recovering, she retorted, angrily,

“There now; a jealous man never hits on his

real rival. Why do not you mention Dr. Bisturi, he who gave the ball for my sake? He who swore by the light of my blue eyes he would make a lady of me? Ha! ha! the old doctor ready to lay his wig and spectacles, and his hoards of crowns at my feet. I tell you what, sir, you had better beware how you worry me, or I shall begin to think that the doctor, old as he is, could hardly make as grumbling a husband as you. You know I can't bear scolding, and won't put up with it.—As for the officers," she added with a faltering voice and an averted face, "what if I accept them as partners for a *monferrina*, or if I seem to listen to the nonsense of their town-bred gallantry. Is it not all for your sake? that I may know their designs and watch their movements. Wherever I be, am I not always concerned for your safety?"

"I beg," replied Moro, earnest and haughty, "that you never again trouble yourself about it. Your friends, the officers, are but too happy to leave me alone. They know that I am neither deaf nor blind, and that Lazzarina is not a distaff. He must

indeed be tired of life who ventures within reach of its shot. And were the rifle even to fail," added the bandit, raising his arm, and pointing to a long Genoese knife peeping out of his pocket on the left side, "there is enough, I hope, to settle any sbirro who would court a closer hug with the bear. No, they know they cannot have me, unless they catch me asleep, and they cannot take me by surprise unless they find a traitor in these mountains; and I could as soon apprehend treason from any man in Val-di-Taro, Stella, as I could suspect you."

Maria Stella winced.

"No," continued the bold mountaineer, in a softened tone, "it is not such services that I expect from you, it is not by such means that you can provide for my tranquillity. My hand is sufficient to take care of my head. It is my heart that is left in your keeping; and if for our mutual happiness—"

"Hush, hush; see there!" exclaimed the girl, with her usual levity, pointing with her fan to a mountain hawk which was sailing loftily over their heads.

"You see, yonder, that kite, or buzzard, or whatever it is?" said the girl.

"It is a noble hawk," said the contrabandist, with the veneration for that bird peculiar to the mountaineers. "Its pinions are as broad as an eagle's."

"Make haste with your rifle and bear him down!"

"The bold falcon does us no harm," remonstrated Paul Moro, who himself a rover, had a fellow feeling for the daring pirate of the air.

"It is a fine shot," insisted the wilful girl, "and I long to see a trial of your skill. Do you hear, sir! Down with your rifle and fire."

The good-natured lover complied reluctantly with the girl's caprice. He raised the muzzle of his gun to a level with the bird, and followed for a second its rotary soaring in the air. Suddenly his heart seemed to smite him. He lowered his piece, and turning to his impatient mistress, "Grace," he said, "grace, for the harmless creature!"

"Harmless plunderer of dove-cots and poultry-yards forsooth. I have no patience with you."

"Every living being follows the instinct with which God Almighty has gifted him," returned the bandit, solemnly; "we have no right to sit in judgment against him."

"None of your nonsense," urged the girl snapshably, "fire forthwith, or I'll dispense with your company in my way back."

The contrabandist again took his unerring aim. The hawk was by this time right over his head, at a very great height. He wheeled round and round, lingeringly and almost imperceptibly, courting, as it were, the fate that awaited him, unfolding his mighty wings to their utmost extent, and offering thus as wide a target as the marksman could desire. Paul fired. The report of the rifle awakened the distant echoes on both sides of the wide stream. The hawk made an upward start, then suddenly sinking heavily, helplessly, he bounded down, turning over and over through the air, until he plunged with a dead splash into the roaring tor-

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rent, many hundred feet beneath the ground on which his destroyer stood.

While Paul with a melancholy eye followed the downfall of the bird, Stella cast a hurried glance towards the forest.

"The brave soaring falcon will never go back to his eyrie," said Paul, turning away his head. "His race is run, and the messenger of death reached him just, perhaps, as he exulted in the full consciousness of his powers. So much for those who put their trust in mortal strength."

"I am only sorry we can have none of his feathers," observed the girl, with great coolness. "I wanted a plume for the cap of my own champion. But come," she added, taking hold of his arm, and hurrying him away, just as he prepared to reload his piece. "We are not a hundred yards from the chapel, and we must not go back without kneeling to the image of our Lady."

The mountaineer followed her without a reply, but in a state of unusual depression. Stella, aware of the gloominess of his disposition,

endeavoured to dispel it, by her incessant volubility.

"There is the enchanted forest," said she, "the nest of sprites and goblins, the haunt of ghosts and ghouls, and all evil spirits that roam by night." Then raising her merry voice, amidst peals of laughter, she sung\* :—

" Day or night, no man should rove  
Through the dismal chesnut grove."

"Prithee, Stella, not that silly song," interrupted Paul Moro. "Sing me rather some staves out of the Lay of San Pellegrino."

But the heedless girl continued raising her voice to its highest pitch.

" Once Joe Miller on his donkey  
Late at night was jogging home,  
It was dark, and he saw double,  
As the forest he did roam ;

\* These absurd lines are a literal translation of an old popular song once introduced in a comic opera, "La Griselda," "La Camilla," or some other in that style. A few scraps of the original I can even now recollect.



In its flowing blanket shrouded  
On his path a phantom rose :  
'Twas the ghost of his grandmother  
And it took him by the nose.

Ahu ! the grove, the dismal grove,  
Is no place where men should rove.

In the forest once a maiden  
Her sweetheart had gone to meet,  
She walk'd trembling and heard rustling  
The dry leaves beneath her feet ;  
An old owl from an old pollard  
Thrice sang out its mournful note ;  
And she started as the brambles  
Pull'd and tore her petticoat.

Ahu ! the grove, the chesnut grove—"

"Peace, Stella!" interrupted the smuggler,  
drawing her back hastily.

"Mercy, what is the matter?" faltered the girl,  
ready to faint with terror.

Every trace of colour had fled from the cheeks  
of Paul Moro. His first movement had been to  
lower the muzzle of his gun in the direction of the  
chapel; his hand next ran to the hilt of his dagger,  
but his self-possession instantly returned, and,  
ashamed of the moment of weakness he had  
evinced :

"Pah!" he exclaimed, "I am growing chicken hearted, I believe, as I am getting old. Didn't I fancy I saw a bayonet gleaming through the branches of that old chesnut-tree?"

"I told you so," retorted the girl, who had rallied her spirits as soon as her companion. "The grove, the dismal grove! that is the place for strange sounds and queer sights."

Then she broke out again:

"Auf di giorno, nè di sera  
Non passiam la Selva Nera.

\* \* \* \*

"Un di carco il molinaro  
Al mulin se ne tornò,  
Era notte ed il somaro  
Alla selva lo portò.

\* \* \* \*

"V'era l'ombra di sua Nonna  
Che pel naso lo pigliò."

They had reached the outskirts of the forest, and stood in front of the chapel. The sun had set behind a huge mass of summer clouds, and the moon was yet struggling through a dense haze down in the East. It was the first and yet the darkest hour of night. The last peals of the Ave Maria from

many a parish church on the hills, died languidly away mellowed by distance, and the soft sigh of eve seemed to spread over the silent landscape. Obeying the influence of the ineffable calmness around him, the contrabandist laid his carabine against the wall, and threw his cap on the rude stone bench which ran all along the front of the shrine. He sat down, drew the pale-faced girl on his knees, and rested his head on her shoulder, musing.

The chapel was a plain, square, stone building, roofed with slate, with no opening but the front door, which was secured by a heavy gate of iron rails, fastened by a latch outside. The building was in a dilapidated state, notwithstanding the high repute of the miraculous powers of the hallowed image it enshrined, and the yearly pilgrimages and processions it received from the neighbouring parishes. Right before the door it had a clear semicircular space, about thirty yards in diameter; but beyond that, as well as behind and on both sides the little sanctuary, the forest, dark, frowning, and almost impervious, invaded the ground.

discontinued, and seemed now to have become utterly impracticable.

By what fatal stratagem Paul's capture had been brought about remained yet, in great measure, a mystery. But however artfully Maria Stella might contrive to avert from herself the odium of that dark transaction—however loudly she bewailed her lover's fate, and her own bereavement, she was soon made aware that the tide of public opinion was setting hard against her, and, as if apprehending that the air of Bedonia had all at once become too keen for her constitution, she prevailed on her grandmother to repair to Borgotaro.

The strong suspicions that were current to her discredit, received ample confirmation by the heartless and almost riotous life into which she plunged as soon as she saw herself safely re-established in her native place. Captain Scotti, he, it was surmised, who commanded the expedition against Paul Moro at St. Mary's chapel, became now her constant attendant. The flatteries of that gay admirer induced her to a course of dissipation which could

no fail to give great offence to the sober community that witnessed it. Whatever may be, or rather may have been the manners of the idle nobility in town, licentiousness is very rare in Italy among the middle and lowest classes. Maria Stella found that she had no longer a right to raise her face before her equals, and in vain urged her gallant swain to restore her good name by the only means in his power. In a moment of despair, advised also as it seems by the captain himself, she yielded to the repeated solicitations of her ancient suitor, Dr. Bisturi, an old miser, aged three score, who had buried three wives, and did not shrink from the contingencies of a fourth connubial experiment.

The wedding took place about three months after the arrest of the contrabandist. Tidings of his trial and sentence at Parma, had recently reached Borgotaro, and the announcement of his execution was hourly expected.

Merrily rang every bell from the crazy old steeple, as the doctor and his youthful bride, now made one flesh for life, issued from the main door

"Come, Paul," said the girl, in a voice which appeared subdued by the solemnity of the hour and of the place. "Let us go in. Three Ave Marias, and then we'll see what Nonna has got for our supper."

The man rose. He lifted up the latch, and pushed the gate open. The girl followed on his footsteps and yet, even yet as she set her foot on the sill, she stopped for a few seconds to take a survey of the surrounding trees.

They knelt side by side on the bare pavement in the centre of the chapel; they bowed their heads before the rudely-carved and gaudily-dressed image on the altar-piece—the clear, silver voice of Maria Stella could be heard responding to the deep tones of the pious contrabandist. The girl was many shades paler than usual as they emerged from the shrine. Paul was about to resume his cap and his rifle when his mistress laid her hand on his arm.

"Stop, dear Paul," she stammered, "I have left my fan in the chapel."

The contrabandist hastened back to the spot they

had just left. As he was stooping to raise the fan from the ground he heard the iron door violently slammed behind him. Maria Stella stood laughing outside.


"Come, child, none of your pranks," cried the mountaineer, his eye flashing with sudden anger. "This is neither the place nor the time for trifling. You know I cannot brook confinement, not even in jest."

As he said this he laid his powerful grasp on the iron rails, and gave them a hearty pull, but in vain.

"There, now you are my prisoner," shouted the wild girl, clapping her hands in all the enjoyment of her mad frolic. "I have half a mind to leave you there to spend the night with the ghosts."

The countenance of the contrabandist became now terrific. "Lift up the latch, giddy girl, or by Heaven—"

Maria Stella was appalled by that menacing scowl; she hastened to comply with his desire, and fumbled for some time at the latch, but, after a few ineffectual efforts she drew back impatiently.



"The devil is in the lock, I do believe," she exclaimed, "lend me your knife, Paul; my fingers are all a-bleeding."

Paul thrust the handle of his dagger through the bars of the door. The girl clutched it eagerly. In that instant the ground became alive with armed men.

"There he is!" said Maria Stella, addressing her words to their leader. "He can't help himself now. Don't hurt him at least. Remember—you promised!"



## V.

## THE WAGES OF SIN.

SEVEN years had elapsed since that new Dalilah had delivered her lover fast and bound (for Paul was too much stunned by her treason to offer even a show of resistance) into the hands of his enemies. Matters bore now a different aspect in the upper regions of Val-di-Taro. There was an end of "free trade" since the last of the contrabandists had disappeared from the scene of his daring achievements. The fate of Paul Moro had daunted the most valiant of his band. A sneaking smuggler would yet occasionally steal through a wolf-path over the border with his pack of prohibited goods on his shoulder; but the fair, gentlemanly practice of highway contraband had been gradually

on all surrounding objects, as if anxious to include the whole of creation in one sweeping malediction. Then with the fury of the wolf of the Appennine, when, wounded by the huntsman's lead, he drives his fangs through his smarting flesh, the miserable convict snapped at his left arm with his teeth with such rabid ferocity, that the blood flowed copiously from the arteries of his lacerated limb. Faint with the loss of blood and the exhaustion of his passion, he was conveyed to the gaol of Borgotaro, where a month elapsed before he was so far recovered as to reach his ultimate destination.

The best part of seven years had now gone by, since Stella's wedding had been saddened by that ominous meeting. She was now seated by her bedside in her chamber, watching the slumbers of her only child, a blooming girl, born within the first twelvemonth of her wedlock. The doctor, her husband, was from home. It was late at night, and her attendant had retired. Unrest and anxiety stood on the face of that solitary watcher. And yet her uneasiness could hardly arise from

any maternal concern for the health or well-being of her daughter, for the dewy roses of thriving freshness, and the seraph smile of happy innocence were on the face of the sleeping girl. Moreover, her eye wandered often from the cradle to the half-closed door of her apartment. She rose also not unfrequently, and paced the room with the agitated step of fretful expectation.

Her countenance had lost much of its native liveliness, and the incessant worming of latent care seemed even to have undermined her gracile constitution. The advantages of the comparative affluence and ease of her present situation had fallen miserably short of her sanguine anticipations. The dulness of her husband's home was but a sad refuge against the withering scorn which awaited her whenever she ventured out into a society, for which her origin as well as her conduct unfitted her. The very man for whose sake she had sunk so low in her own and the world's estimation, Captain Scotti himself, had but coldly requited her boundless, though guilty devotion. Not many

months after her wedding, that officer had been removed to a distant part of the province. He had left her letters unanswered, and all intercourse had for a long lapse of years ceased between them.

But he had come back at last; suddenly, unexpectedly; an interchange of billets had taken place, and the doctor's absence offering a rare opportunity, that very evening had been appointed for a reconciliatory meeting.

Trembling with anxiety sat the guilty wife by her daughter's cradle. That girl, she knew, had more than her ample share in that cold and selfish man's affections. Since his last clandestine visit years ago, the helpless infant had grown into a lively and rational being. Stella looked on her own girl who, she hoped, was to become a pledge of renovated tenderness. To the mother, she thought, he might show himself overbearing and tyrannical; but that child's smiles, the very sight of its sleeping loveliness could not fail to subdue him, to win him back to his wonted allegiance.

Outside, the night was dark and squally. The

moaning gusts of the autumn wind shook the old mansion with incessant fury. A solitary star would glimmer for an instant through a breach opened between the drifting clouds; but huge black masses, as if of Stygian vapours, immediately thronged upon the vacant space, and all again became more compact and deeper gloom.

Maria Stella, now at her window, contemplated the revel of the raging elements. A shiver ran through her veins as the cold blast howled through the crannies of the shattered shutters, in the sound of a hungry wolf, prowling at dead of night round the palings of a lonely sheep-fold.

On a sudden her countenance beamed, her hands were clasped with ecstatic joy; for the form of a man was descried advancing rapidly down the silent street. Stella recognised that lofty figure, that martial step, that proud bearing of his head. Her eyes had not deceived her. Yet a few moments, and the stately officer stopped on the threshold of her house. It was an old seignorial mansion, almost a castle in appearance, but sadly

out of repair, which the griping physician had bought out of the wreck of a ruined family. The main-door in the street remained open day and night, the doctor's household being only protected by the doors at the entrance of the habitable apartments. The captain entered. There was a short interval of trembling expectation, and presently a light foot-tread stole rapidly up the marble staircase. Maria Stella hurried to the door with outstretched arms. The door flew open, yielding to a hasty impulse from without. In stalked the nocturnal visitor—and Maria Stella fell back, uttering a shriek—a piercing, rending, unearthly shriek, as if her heart-strings had snapped asunder.

Paul Moro stood before her!

## VII.

## THE AVENGER.

DURING six years and nine months Maria Stella never had once heard of, never alluded to, the transported contrabandist. Thought of him, however, she had; and his sudden appearance, in that guilty moment, called back by an instantaneous rush, a whole age of secret terror and stifled remorse. Great Heaven! was it the phantom of the dead rising before her an avenger? or if it was, indeed, Paul living and breathing, how had he broken his chains and travelled safely back to his mountains? And Paul had met HIM! for her eyes had not deceived her, and the captain stood but one minute since on her threshold. They had

met! Her lover had fallen by the hand of his rival!

Such were the first thoughts that crowded on the mind of the distracted woman. Something awfully mysterious, inexplicable, was blended with the consternation of that terrific surprise. It was a consciousness of certain, sudden, inevitable annihilation, the foreboding of an overwhelming evil, of which it was not in the power of her startled mind to guess the real nature, or to calculate the appalling extent.

Maria Stella staggered back. Thrice did she press both hands on her heart—thrice did she gasp convulsively, as she reeled backwards towards her daughter's cradle. Her marble-pale countenance in an instant became overspread with flaming scarlet. But that sanguine hue immediately gave place to a dark purple. There was a spasmodic throbbing at her temples; a gurgling and rattling at her throat; she tottered backwards and backwards, with her glaring eyes rivetted on the blasting apparition—fascinated as if Medusa's head had



suddenly offered itself before her gaze; thrice she faltered in a smothered voice, " Paul! Paul Moro!" and sank overpowered across the couch of her child.

That which caused that misguided woman such a trance of cruel perplexity is, however, for us, a problem of easy solution. Only three days before, the port of Genoa had been thrown into an uproar by the announcement of the escape of six galley-slaves from the *Darsena*. They had been seen prowling along the sea-shore towards La Spezia. They were all bandits and smugglers from Parma; Paul Moro was their leader, he had projected and promoted their bold scheme of escape. They had seized on a fishing *tartana*, and five of them sailed for the opposite coast of Barbary. But the leader remained behind. He resisted the warm entreaties, the tears, and threats of his comrades. He had a vow to fulfil, he urged. He stood long gazing after their receding sail, as wind and wave were rapidly wafting them to a land of freedom and security. He wished them speed and success in

their voyage. But he envied them not; he did not mourn over their unavoidable separation. His fate awaited him on shore.

Then he moved homewards. He trod on his native hills, he plunged into the depths of his forests; from an over-hanging cliff he hailed the broad valley which had so often witnessed his triumphs. He stood on the ruins of his dismantled dwelling, he toiled through the thorns and nettles luxuriating on his deserted homefield. The desolation of his own heart seemed equally spread over the scenery around.

But he had not come to mourn over ruins, or to wail over the devastation of inclement seasons. He had a sacred duty, a solemn vow of revenge to accomplish. Three days and three nights he wandered, biding his time, and watching the movements of his victim. The doctor's absence, the captain's return, the secret messages between the two lovers, their appointed meeting—he knew all—he guessed all, as if gifted with a miraculous power of divination.

At the appointed hour he hid himself behind the portals of Stella's house. Behind a pillar in the dark hall, Paul Moro awaited the arrival of the expected guest. He heard, he recognised his tread, he perceived his tall figure, he fancied he could discern his features as the captain passed him in the dark, groping up to the staircase. The contrabandist laid hand on his dagger, and followed close on his footsteps.

But passion is hasty and inconsiderate, guilt is suspicious and cowardly. The captain heard the footfall of his pursuer. He stopped short, he held his breath. He was far indeed from dreaming of the real nature of his danger; but he was assailed by a thousand vague terrors. He apprehended the doctor might have detected his clandestine connection with his wife, and waylaid him; he even dreaded the vengeance of Maria Stella herself, whom he felt he had wronged, and whom he knew by experience capable of the most dangerous extremes. A sudden faint-heartedness stole over the frame of the gallant captain. He resolved to give

up the interview. This change in his disposition was but the work of a moment; he stole through a back staircase into the yard, and through a coach door glided out of the house.

Paul Moro knew nothing of this retreating movement. He felt sure he was following on the track of his mortal enemy. He held him safe. Thirst for revenge blinded and deafened him. Thoroughly acquainted with every turning in the house, he rushed to the door of Stella's chamber, into which his rival must in that very instant have preceded him. He pushed open the door, and was scarcely less surprised than Stella herself when he found her alone.

He could hardly believe his own eyes. He cast a hasty glance round the room, and that rapid survey satisfied him that his victim had vanished. He stood amazed on the spot.

His dress was torn, soiled, and squalid, the consequence of his rambling days and nights in the woods. His face was hollow and haggard, the result of long hours of fast and sleeplessness, and

his features had been hardened, the expression of his countenance had grown wild with years of weary toil, with the constant intercourse with degraded beings. He was a miserable no less than a formidable object to look upon; and even independently of the fatal circumstances under which he presented himself before Maria Stella, he might easily have suggested to any other beholder the idea that he was only the spectre of his former self.

Paul Moro recovered from the astonishment in which the inconceivable disappearance of the captain had thrown him, only to be paralysed by the effect that his presence seemed to have on the former object of his affections. He flew to her assistance, he caught her up in his arms. He called out her name loudly, frantically. He roused the house by his alarming cries.

In his moments of maddening despair in the condemned cell—in his hours of gloomy loneliness in the bagnio—in his first entrancement of emancipation—in his deeply-meditated scheme of revenge,

the name of Stella had never been associated in his mind with feelings of rancour and animosity. He came not to harm her. Her unnatural defection grieved him to the very core of his heart. He mourned over the abyss into which an angel had fallen. Her treachery had called forth unutterable anguish, irrecoverable misery, but he could not hate her. He could never have the heart to hurt her.

His long-cherished revenge had a far higher aim; his wrath ran in a far different channel. He came to strike her seducer dead at her feet. Him who had poisoned the atmosphere in which innocence breathed, by the foul breath of his base flattery—who had whispered treason into the incautious ear of an unsophisticated country maiden, and made love an instrument of the darkest perfidy—who had darkened the sun in his firmament, and shaken his belief in God's own Justice and Truth—Him he came to stab to the heart!

And meanwhile his designed victim seemed to have sunk underground, and Stella was fainting—

dying before him. Dying ! for all his endeavours, and those of the servants who had been startled from their sleep and ran to her assistance, were equally vain. Stella's eyes were still wide open, and seemed to follow every movement of the contrabandist, as with violent gestures, with bursting sobs, he solicited every person in the room to lend a helping hand. But the chill of death was on her darkened face, in her stiffened limbs ; still, for ever, was the heaving of her breast. The conflict of violent emotions had produced instant suffocation.

A fortnight after that disastrous night, Paul landed in Bastia, in Corsica. Notwithstanding his cropped ears, the runaway galley-slave was enlisted in the foreign legion, which the French government was then fitting out for Africa. At the head of the forlorn hope, Paul Moro distinguished himself for a few months against the Moors of Algiers. The violence of his onset, the weight of his prodigious strength, and his recklessness of all dangers, enabled him to come off, single-handed, from many a desperate engagement.

He was heard of as promoted to the rank of a serjeant, and decorated with the Legion d'Honneur, by the hand of the commanding marshal. These honours, and more, perhaps, the activity of that desultory campaign, seemed to have effaced from his heart all painful reminiscences, and reconciled him to existence. One morning as he was sent to reconnoitre at the head of a small detachment of light infantry, he was struck on the head, and carried away into captivity by the Arabs. He must either have died in consequence of his wounds, or been deliberately put to death by his barbarous enemy, as for many years he has never been heard of.



CAROLINE:  
A TALE OF FAIR FLORENCE.



## I.

## THE ENGLISH IN ITALY.

“THERE was a sound of revelry by night;” there was bustle and confusion, and a throng of tilting carriages in the court of the Palazzo Rospigliosi, at Florence. There were flaring torches, stamping horses, coachmen swearing in English, German, and Russian.

Lady Phillimore gave one of her grand cosmopolitic routs. It was not a ball, nor a concert, nor yet one of those harum-scarum entertainments that go by the name of “mobs.” The object of the

meeting was known to few, and understood by none. It was to be a *lettura*, an *improvvisazione*, a *seccatura*, a literary réunion after the fashion of the country.

Lady Phillimore had, on this occasion, been *extremely particular* in her invitations—that is, she had drained Florence of its motley population. The guests were from the four corners of the globe. The accomplished and the wealthy, the great and the learned of many regions, were blended in a crowd. There were long-haired Prussian professors, and bewigged Danish *savans*, bare-necked German artists, and *lorgnetted* French *attachés*, and amongst a few of a better class, many of that vulgar breed, whom gold enables to haunt the idle towns of the continent, the two varieties most prevalent in the European menagerie—the Russian bears and the English bores.

Conspicuous among the latter, and distinguishable by their colossal turbans, and by their air of familiarity with the lady of the house, were two female dabblers in literature, a Mrs. Brattle, a

notorious novelist, who had, as she expressed it, *walked* half the courts of Europe; and a Lady Emmelina Bruton, a person of whom her best friends said she had all bumps in her head save that of *adhesiveness*—a *mal-maritata*, who dipped her pen in gall, and emptied her quiver at all *mankind*, with a hope that some random shaft might find its way to her ill-wedded lord. The rest of the company was made up of dowager countesses and consumptive spinsters; a lord bishop, with a swarm of his daughters, and the squires and lordlings licensed to flirt with the said bishop's daughters—besides sundry lean and lank poets, magazine editors, wits, rakes, sharpers, and missionaries.

The “natives” were few; and there would have been none but for the circumstance that one of their number was to be exhibited as the hero or the victim—the lion of the night. They shrunk back and clustered together in a corner, awed and abashed by the consciousness of their own insignificance. All good understanding between the

Italians and their foreign visitors, especially the English, is for ever at an end. Tourists may have their neat hotels in the best quarter of the town. The grand-duke—that inn-keeper on a larger scale—may throw open his drawing-rooms, his galleries to them. But Italians who respect themselves never appear at court. The English may buy the pure sky, the climate, the country; they may feel at home in the Vatican, or the Palazzo Pitti; but, from that very reason, the heart of the soundest part of the nation is closed against them. This evening, however, there seemed to be a compromise between the parties. Some of the noblest of Florentine patriots mingled in the crowd. Gino Capponi and Niccolini, the former blind with incessant study, the second bright with the inspiration of genius, stood conversing in the embrasure of a window. Next to them sat Domeniconi, the actor, holding the hand of a pale youth—the same who was produced that night as a candidate for the honours of authorship. He was to read a few extracts of a new tragedy, “*Vanina d’Ornano*.”

## II.

## THE OWL'S NEST.

ALTOVITI was utterly unknown even in his native city of Florence ; an orphan from childhood, he had been brought up in a Jesuit college at Rome, and had but lately returned to his birth-place as an *abate* ; wearing, that is, the church dress, without yet being an ordained priest.

Altoviti had known no boyhood. The sternness and austerity of his early guardians had moulded his character to an habitual gloominess, which his subsequent years of cloistral education were not calculated to dissipate. On his return to Florence, he found himself a stranger in the land of his nativity ; he felt companionless in the home of his infancy. The levity of that gay frivolous town

clashed with the moodiness of his temper. He sought refuge in the country, where he lived in an almost ascetic retirement, on his father's estates, in an old tumble-down tower, on the brow of a bare steep hill in the neighbourhood of Fiesole.

His solitude, however, his meditative studies, were frequently broken in upon by foreign visitors, chiefly English, wandering in quest of the picturesque. A thunder-storm, a horse ungovernably wild, a bevy of ladies screaming and fainting with terror, in an ill-omened day, forced the abate from his secluded apartment. Assistance and shelter were hospitably proffered, and eagerly accepted. The beauties recovered so far as to be able to laugh at their own fears, at themselves, and at everything besides. The old tower was invaded and rummaged with uncereemonious curiosity. The solitary inmate wondered at, and quizzed with more wit than urbanity. The frolicsome humour of the guests seemed, by degrees, to win upon the bewildered host. He skimmed off the oil from some flasks of Chianti as old as himself. He spread before

them a substantial luncheon, to which the keen Appennine air, and a two hours' ride, had imparted unutterable relish. Altoviti parted with his new friends an altered man. He insisted on riding with them as far as the town gates; and not without a promise to wait upon them on the morrow at the Rospigliosi Palace.

Yes; the leader of that frolicsome exploring expedition was no less a person than the lady of that mansion, the grand *Miledi Inglese*, Lady Phillimore herself.

This gentlewoman has been settled at Florence for above twenty years. She was among the first to venture out of this wave-bound ark at the first subsiding of the revolutionary flood. She was the relict of a city sheriff or alderman, who died only six months after being knighted by the last of the Georges. With a princely fortune and the vague appellation of "Lady," the young widow had tact enough to perceive that her position in London was fraught with difficulties and mortifications. She crossed the Channel, and was now,

playing princess and sultana at Florence. She was a patroness by profession. The Rospigliosi Palace became a caravansera for all European Hadjees. The proudest of her countrymen sued abroad for the acquaintance of the citizen's wife they had carefully shunned and dreaded at home. Strange as it may appear, the alderman's widow had been polished even to regeneration by intercourse with people of rank on the Continent. Her title and wealth, and the favour of British ministers, had been a passport to some of the pettiest German and Italian Courts; where her *gaucheries* had been set down on the score of national peculiarities. Merelowness of birth, in a woman, is never utterly irreclaimable. She is always up to any station, if she will only trust the prompting of her unerring feminine instinct. A queen need only be a woman to be sure to become and to grace her throne.

Indebted as she considered herself to foreigners for her promotion, Lady Phillimore insisted upon freely admitting them into her brilliant society. The feeling of estrangement, not to say hostility,



which contemptuous haughtiness on one side, and resentful vanity on the other, have engendered between the best Italians and the worst class of their overbearing visitors, was allowed no utterance in the marble saloons of the Rospigliosi Palace. "Love me, love my guests," was Lady Phillimore's motto; and the few among the Florentine gentry whom she took under her protection, were safe against the *morgue* and purse-proud superciliousness, which, it would be vain to deny it, render but too many of her countrymen unpopular abroad.

Owing to some slights she fancied she had received on the part of the Grand Duke, Lady Phillimore had gone over to the liberal party, and her drawing-room had thus become a focus of opposition, where patriots could safely vent their animosity against Austria and the smooth-pawed, oily despot, whose lulling rule is cited as a model of enlightened parental authority\*.

Such was the house into which the Hermit of

\* ——— "Odio il Tiranno  
Che col sonno t'uccide——."—NICCOLINI.

Fiesole found himself so unexpectedly domesticated. The old alderman's relict, however, had been too long a buxom widow to flatter herself with having, by the agency of her own charms, operated so astounding a revolution in the habits of the recluse, or to claim for herself the honour of that valuable addition to the list of her daily visitors. Lady Phillimore had her decoy-bird. She had a niece—a distant relation, an humble friend—or whatever else her position in the house of the grand lady might be—one Caroline Etheridge, a parson's daughter, it was understood, and as lovely a creature, as arrant a flirt, as a parson's daughter need be.

## III.

## THE FLIRT.

LADY PHILLIMORE had borrowed her from her father in Devonshire, who was blessed with half a score of children besides, and could well spare this one, with an express understanding that she should "bring her out and marry her off." The blooming beauty of the English girl, and certain vague hints from her aunt as to the probable reversion of the late alderman's property, had enlisted several hundred fortune-hunters, British and Foreign, in the ranks of Caroline's suitors. Lady Phillimore and her advisers, the two bosom-friends above mentioned, Mrs. Brattle and Lady Emmelina, laid their wise heads together, and after a careful review

of the respective merits of English, Irish, and Scottish *beaux*, it was unanimously resolved, that the girl's *free choice* should fall on the Hon. Augustus Phibbs, a gentleman noted for a long scraggy neck, a squeaking voice, and bristling carrotty hair, but who combined the advantages of rank and wealth with various accomplishments, which enabled him to act amateur sub-editor and gratuitous penny-a-liner to the "Palladium of Universal Literature," a periodical work of universal notoriety.

The wedding, however, was, by desire of Caroline herself, adjourned *sine die*, and the happy man that was to be, was in the interim travelling southward, to collect materials for a series of papers on the "Mental and Moral Degeneracy of the Italians," under the ponderous burden of which the massive columns of the "Palladium" were to quake and quiver for many a number to come.

On these terms matters stood at the epoch of Lady Phillimore's visit to the old tower at Fiesole. The flushed countenance, the luxuriant charms of

the excited beauty of Devon, her over-acted alarms, and subsequent pertness and petulance, the thousand *agaceries* of a spoiled beauty, a consummate coquette even when only a romping country-girl at her father's parsonage—aimed, in a moment of wanton exhilaration, against the peace of an unsophisticated recluse, roused a tempest in Altoviti's mind which instantly and hopelessly hurled reason from its throne. A rush of unknown, but as he instinctively apprehended, unhallowed passion, assailed the unguarded heart of the young candidate for priesthood.

Caroline perceived it. She marked every change in his working countenance; she had never before witnessed how, and she was delighted to see at what rate an Italian and a priest could fall in love.

Caroline had not a bad heart. Indeed she could hardly be said to have any heart, good, bad, or indifferent. Her craving for excitement was proportionate to her natural defect of excitability. Perpetually in want of strong emotions, she left

nothing unattempted to work herself up into an artificial state in some degree resembling enthusiasm. Her most successful contrivance to that effect was to watch the ravages of passion in other people's bosoms. There was some philanthropy in her apparently heartless coquetry. She exerted herself to liberate others from a state of apathy which appeared to herself unendurable. She heartily wished some one would have done as much for herself. But till her own turn came, she was indefatigable in testing the susceptibilities of every heart within reach.

Never in her brilliant career of systematic flirtation had such a subject been offered to her psychological experiments as the unhappy Altoviti. She dragged him along the street of Florence chained to her chariot. He had surrendered at discretion. She wished him to forego his hermitage at the old tower at Fiesole.—He removed to town. She objected to the blue collar and three-cornered hat of his priestly costume.—He made a bonfire of his ecclesiastical trappings. Finally, she desired

him to make a show of his literary talent—and there he now stood in her aunt's drawing-room, a *debutant dramatist*.

Caroline, with the quick apprehension of her sex, had read the secret of her lover's heart. With the penetration of a well-cultivated understanding, she felt that it was no mean captive that had fallen into her toils; that Altoviti was a poet-born; that the diffidence of true pride alone prevented him from emerging from obscurity and command the homage of multitudes. She determined that her friends should see what lofty spirit worshipped at her shrine; that the world should witness, applaud, and envy her conquest. She had a discourse with her aunt on the subject. Lady Phillimore, we have seen, was addicted to the exercise of patronage. She was a promoter of Italian literature and art; that is, she fed a swarm of locusts, under the name of *improvisatori*, *dilettanti*, and all such rabble. She murdered Italian dreadfully enough to frighten her Florentine maid into hysterics, and wore a circlet or diadem with four cameos, effigiating the four

great national poets. By her exertions and Caroline's wilfulness, Altoviti was now to be brought before the public and made a great man of, in spite of himself.



## IV.

## LOVE AND FAME.

AND now the poet was at his post. A deep, awful silence prevailed in the crowd. Caroline, by way of a prelude, struck up the first notes of the famous introductory chorus of *Norma*, with a masterly hand, long since accustomed to command applause. Every now and then she tossed her head backwards, as if to shake off the auburn ringlets which danced witchingly about her proud fair face, but, in reality, to behold how her victim stood the tremendous ordeal to which her ambition had brought him.

Altoviti sat alone, at a little distance from the piano, his face turned towards the audience, his manuscript on the table before him. He was pale—paler than his friends had yet seen him—and

though apparently calm and almost haughtily serene, it required no very keen observer to perceive that the heart quailed within him.

He gazed mechanically at the glittering crowd—that crowd so quaintly jumbled together—those *few friends* Lady Phillimore had prepared him for. Most of his audience were utter strangers to him; most of them, too, utterly unfamiliar with the language he was to read in. Most unblushingly and unmercifully was he stared at in return. The bishop's daughters and their admirers, especially, directed against him as well maintained a fire from their burning eye-glasses as Archimedes ever poured on the devoted fleet of Marcellus. Mrs. Brattle and Lady Emmelina encouraged him with a familiar wave of their fans. Lady Phillimore went round and whispered a few words on the historical subject the drama was derived from.

Occasional murmuring and tittering also would break out from the stillness of the promiscuous assembly, the meaning of which, if it ever reached

his ears, was not calculated to reassure the uneasiness of the poor pilloried poet.

However, as Lady Phillimore observed, he was in for it; and the comments of the foreign part of the audience on the novelty of an exhibition so greatly at variance with their preconceived notions of propriety, and their remarks on Italian charlatans and public exhibitors, and the *bore* of listening for hours to unintelligible, outlandish gibberish, and the unhandsome manner in which they had been *taken in*,—all this was meant as an aside, and the poet had no business to take any notice of it, even if he had the misfortune of being as familiar with ultramontane tongues and their slang as he was with his own pure Tuscan.

But Altoviti was young and handsome: two great qualifications for the suffrage of the most tender, and happily the largest part of his auditory: and as his eyes flashed and his cheeks were flushed with the rapid emotions which Bellini's glorious strain roused in his bosom, his audience

became aware that they stood in the presence of one of those gifted beings, whose energies need only be directed to a proper object, to be sure of their ascendancy over their fellow-creatures.

Nothing, also, when he began, could equal the manliness, mellowness, and flexibility of the tones of his voice, and notwithstanding that slight *cantilena* which seems inseparable from poetical recitation in Italy, his vivid and impassionate delivery had something in itself irresistible suasive and winning.

He had little or no action. He read sitting; only rising for one instant for a slight obeisance at the outset. This posture, and his diffidence and trepidation, did not allow him to make any attempt at that exaggerated gesticulation for which his countrymen are justly ridiculed abroad; but there was an eloquence in his countenance, a language in the ebbing and flowing of his flitting complexion, an expression in the movement of his head, in the quivering of his lips, in the very faltering of his voice, which had power to rivet the attention, and

to find its way unerringly, immediately, to the sympathies of the bystanders.

The first words were, as might be expected, almost inaudible; but as he warmed with his subject, as his eyes met Caroline's, who had silently stolen from the piano and resumed her seat by the side of her aunt, the rest of the company faded from his view, and he proceeded with that impressive ardour, with that heart-storming vehemence, with which he alone who created can read, and which proves how little the most unearthly music can add to the natural melody of the human language.

Caroline grasped Lady Phillimore's hand. She cast frequent glances at the object before her, enraptured at an exhibition of feeling never before witnessed. The transport of the reader proved for a moment contagious. She felt a choking at her throat, a tingling in her ears; she yearned to her lover; she longed to throw her arms round his neck, to hide her head in his bosom, as if the throbbing of his heart and the glowing of his

cheek could communicate heat and life—could thaw the iceberg that had till that moment lain so heavily on her breast.

Hardly one person in the room but sympathized with her. The first act had been listened to with that respectfully frigid attention which characterises a circle of well-bred but hypercritical hearers; but as scene followed scene, and the interest attached to the subject, and the rapidity and intensity of action, the beauty of style—the real merit, in short, of the composition became apparent—the Italian part of the audience, and all familiar with the language, insisted on having the whole drama from beginning to end, and gave the most unequivocal testimonies of unmixed delight.

As the last words were drowned in a burst of applause, Caroline stole a last glance at the poet. By an unaccountable association of ideas, the thought of the absent Hon. Augustus Phibbs occurred to her fancy, and for the first time in her life she felt as if the heart ought to enter for something in a matrimonial arrangement.

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## V.

## THE FIASCO.

SCARCELY had a fortnight elapsed since that memorable evening when the good people of Florence shut up shop, and cut their *Benedizione*, to be in time for the new tragedy at the Teatro Cocomero. It was then mid-Lent. The *Pergola* and the Opera were under the interdict of the holy season, and the habitués had no resource left but the *Prosa*. The playhouse was opened long before sunset, to avoid tumult at the entrance. Altoviti had repaired to the theatre, prevailed upon by Caroline and her aunt, to escort them to their box. The dress circle was invaded by the English. The bishop's daughters, long-necked as cranes, tall and erect as Lombardy poplars, were nodding, smirking, and telegraphing on the right. The ponderous

turbans of Madam Brattle and Lady Emmelina were to be seen towering on the left. Altoviti shrank back in his box. Although his tragedy had been announced anonymously, although he was almost unknown to the public, he felt as if all the eyes of the crowded audience were turned towards one box and riveted on one object.

Alas, poor votary of fame! Come forward and dare to look at this dread jury that are here convened to pass their verdict on the work of your brain! See among those rows of vulgar gaping faces in the pit, still stupified by the drowsiness of their hasty dinners, whom you would deem likely to comprehend the poetry of your soul? whom you would select as fit to be introduced into the sanctuary of your mind? whom you would raise to the level of your loftiest inspirations?—and it is of such a crowd, of these men, for each of whom, singly, you entertain no feeling short of utter contempt, that you, proud man, stoop to court the gregarious acclamation! It is from the roaring of such a menagerie that you, privileged being, you



phœnix, suffer yourself to be disturbed from the serenity of the ethereal region it was given to your broad-winged genius to expatiate through !

True, the Florentines are, comparatively, a bright, keen-witted people. True, you may find among the habitués, men of judgment and taste ; but these deem it beneath their dignity to suffer themselves to be betrayed into any exhibition of feeling. The well-bred and accomplished give no sign. Gloved hands never clap.

“ Vanina d’Ornano ” was not a work destitute of taste. The subject was happily chosen ; the poet had done it ample justice. The long assiduous cares he had bestowed upon it had left nothing to desire on the score of plausibility of plan, delineation of characters, harmony and loftiness of style. But it had little or no stage effect. Correct and faultless as a literary production, his piece stood little chance of success as a dramatic performance. Those who had been so warm and pretty nearly sincere in their commendation of that juvenile essay, when actuated by the prestige of the poet’s

own declamation, in Lady Phillimore's drawing-room—Capponi and Niccolini among the number—were now surprised at the tameness and languor pervading that chaste but unimpassioned exhibition, and repented the encouragement they had given for its production on the stage.

But it was not on the ground of its good or bad qualities that poor "Vanina" was to encounter its fate. There are a hundred accessory circumstances on which the ultimatum of popular judgment depends, even more than on the intrinsic value of the piece itself—a hundred all-powerful, mysterious, inexorable agencies, which the proud Altoviti neglected or scorned to propitiate. He had no hired *clacqueurs*; no interested partisans except the few aristocratic friends of Lady Phillimore in the dress circle, chiefly foreigners, whose demonstration, even had they condescended to make any in his favour, was sure, out of sheer contradiction, out of national jealousy, to call forth the animadversion of the many-headed *mobocracy* above and below. The Italians are mightily patriotic, mightily

independent on the parterre of their theatres ; a state of hostility is invariably found to exist between the native and the foreign faction at the opera ; and although the tragedy had been given as the work *di penna Fiorentina*, still the interest of the *Inglesì* in its success was too obvious not to call forth a contrary disposition on the part of the emulous multitude.

Some untoward events, also, conspired from the very outset to keep the audience that evening in a state of unwonted restlessness and ferment. A parcel of foreign youngsters, being, in fact, some of the officers of an English frigate anchored at Leghorn, had newly arrived in town ; and after revelling and carousing at Schneider's Hotel till late in the afternoon, had been seized with a sudden whim to see the new play. They had rushed in, in a state of raving intoxication, and taken the pit by storm : one or two of them had, even before the raising of the curtain, been laid hold of by the *carabinieri* and turned out for misdemeanour. The remaining party had been sobered down and

struck dumb for a moment; but a sullen determination had been entered into, by the most daring of them, to leave no stone unturned to mar the enjoyment of their peaceful neighbours, and to wreak their vengeance on the luckless drama and its inoffensive author.

Although enough is known of the doings of English officers at Malta, Corfu, and other foreign ports, to screen me from any imputation of harbouring a wish to calumniate them, I must in this instance, so far do them justice as to state that their misconduct was not so much the result of their natural love of mischief, as of the suggestions of an evil-designing spirit, who had an interest in urging them to do their worst.

That carroty-headed monster, the Hon. Augustus Phibbs, was amongst them. That worthy *littérateur* had just returned from his protracted trip to the South. He did not like the look of things in general, as he found them on his return. He was not pleased with the domestication with Caroline of what Lady Phillimore called, "the interesting

native." He was bored to death by the drama, and the fuss everybody in the house made about it. Surlily enough he declined countenancing the play with his presence, even for the sake of his lady's company. He joined a group of fellow-travellers at the hotel; among the officers of Her Majesty's frigate, *Minerva*, he found some old college friends. The spirit of ancient schoolboy mischief was revived by that unlooked-for meeting. Phibbs threw out a hint about the *fun* of the new play. He described it as a parody, a travesty; he prepared them for a farce in tragic disguise. Having thus worked them up to a proper mood for "a lark," and relying on their ignorance of the language, and still more on their fuddled understanding, he gave the signal for a general move. He was now busy in the middle alley of the pit, bustling from one group to another of his disappointed companions, teasing and taunting them, setting them up against the dullness and flatness of Italian humour.

This little piece of malice prepense succeeded

beyond his fondest expectation: what with the broad jests of those tipsy brawlers, their-outrageous peals of laughter, their crowing and squeaking, snoring and sneezing, and the cries of "Shame!" "Silence!" "Turn them out!" of the scandalized citizens around them, and the jostling and pushing of the vainly interfering police—it soon became impossible to restore order and calm.

A mirthful mood, so deplorably jarring with the solemn train of feeling which the development of the action was intended to call forth, gradually gained ground and became contagious. The farce in the pit got the better of the tragedy on the stage: and when, as the evil powers would have it, towards the close of the fourth act, the drama being then at the acme of pathetic intensity, the Hon. Augustus Phibbs, emboldened by success, flung a chesnut towards the stage, which was heard rattling against the Roman nose of Domeniconi, the hero—the roaring of the multitude knew no limits. Scarcely a word could be heard of the ensuing act, and the curtain fell amidst such an

awful finale of hisses, of howls and yells, as gave ample evidence of the most decisive *Fiasco* the old Cocomero had witnessed time out of memory\*.

The failure of one of his pieces is no great disgrace to the French or English dramatist. Writing is with him a trade, and as much liable to the ups and downs of earthly vicissitude as any other money-making concern. He looks down on his incensed judges with a philosophical sneer, and repairs to a good oyster-supper with his good friends the actors, calm, stoic, impassible, as if nothing had been.

With Altoviti it was otherwise. He was born and educated in a country where literature, entertaining no hope of solid rewards, must rest satisfied with, and aspire to, nothing beyond the vain clamour of popular applause, where success or failure clings to an author for life. He was not poor, and had been impelled to enter into the dangerous

\* Few of our readers can be unfamiliar with the meaning of *Fiasco*, a cant word used throughout Italy to designate a failure, especially in theatrical matters.

arena by no selfish views of pecuniary emolument or worldly preferment. That single drama had been the object of his secret pride for years. He had strained his faculties even to exhaustion; and he hoped—nay he had been induced into a belief—that it was well worth, that it would repay all the cares bestowed upon it.

Nor was that all. Caroline had praised it. She seemed to lay as much stress as himself on that ill-fated production. From the evening of its first reading her manner seemed changed towards him! She had evinced an interest in the work—perhaps she felt for the author! That proud, ambitious spirit was to be propitiated by a signal success. And now!—a hissed author!—an absurd character, held up to public derision—crushed, annihilated!

On the same night the unsuccessful dramatist, alone, on foot, in a state bordering on distraction, sought the retirement of his old tower at Fiesole. He had shut the world out, and would see none of his friends. By stratagem or bribery, by some



feminine devilry, *one*, however, gained admittance. Caroline had felt some compunction at her heedless conduct. She came with her aunt, and had a long interview with the unhappy recluse. The result of that meeting was long time a mystery; but the resolution the discomfited poet had come to, in the first bitterness of his disappointment, of consummating his moral suicide by retiring to a monastery, was understood to be, from that very evening, abandoned.

In due course of time there was fuss and bustle, and a throng of carriages at the Rospigliosi Palace—great noise and gala and all the clatter of a grand *déjeuner*; Lady Phillimore declared “she was all in a fluster!” Caroline bestowed her hand on Altoviti—and as much of her heart as he might manage to thaw.

## VI.

## LOVE IN A COTTAGE.

THE dilapidated old tower was left to the rooks and owls of the Appennines. Vanina was suffered to work its way into public favour by a new experiment at the next season,—and the ex-Abate, together with his blooming bride, removed to a cool, shady, Devonshire snugery, where the flirt and hoyden of three Florentine seasons soon subsided into that most perfect model of feminine grace, an English wife.

## VII.

## THE REVENGE.

THE Hon. Augustus Phibbs and three of his most unruly fellow-rioters were, for that night, locked up in the guard-room of the carabinieri. Released, after a cheerless night, by the paternal interference of Her British Majesty's representative, he lost no time in calling at the Rospigliosi Palace, where he found the ladies from home. From home they have been to him ever since!

What schemes of mischief and revenge may not be hatched by a brain under the influence of a head of carroty hair! The disappointed Phibbs vowed to everlasting infamy the ill-starred *Abate* who had irreparably robbed him of his bride. Three days and three nights he brooded over his

scheme of vengeance. At last his concocted venom found its vent in the columns of the "Palladium;" where, among the items of "our weekly chit-chat," the all-important intelligence was conveyed to English readers, that the new tragedy at the Teatro Cocomero had turned out a "Solennissimo Fiasco."

## TEMPORARY INSANITY.

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“ Fui l'ultime lagrime,  
Che il miser versò,  
Poi cupo nell' anima  
Il duol rinserò ;  
Di negri fantasimi  
Più sempre il nodrì ;  
Ahi, misero, misero,  
La vita abborrì !”

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“ SIR HORACE THOROGOOD is requested to call  
on Morton Sheridan this evening after eight, on  
matters of supreme importance.

“ 13, *Little Russell Street, Bloomsbury*,  
“ *Friday, May 2.*”

“ Dear me ! what is the matter with him ? Hard  
up, I dare say, poor fellow. Perhaps ill, and just  
this evening—this evening ! Let me see. Dinner

with Sir Samuel Goodrich—ball at the Countess of Ragland's—Macready's benefit at the Hay-market. I wish to goodness he had chosen a more convenient opportunity! 'Matters of supreme importance'—fudge! What more momentous business than a snug dinner with an old crony? And yet if the poor devil is in distress—an upright warm-hearted fellow like Morton Sheridan! Oh! come, Sir Horace, make up your mind, we must go."

After this brief commune with himself, the good-natured baronet took up his hat and stick, not omitting, by way of precaution, to cram a few bank-notes in his pocket book.

"Bloomsbury—Little Russell Street, Bloomsbury! I should like to know what business decent people have to take up their quarters in Bloomsbury?—and these vile streets are so dirty, and these side-walks so greasy—what a fool I must have been not to order out my brougham! And yet—no, hang 'it! better so; a carriage would create such a bustle in these dingy regions, and John has such a way of thundering at poor

people's doors. Better so. Let us spare the nerves of poor Sheridan the irritation of a menial's impertinence. Well—I wonder what is the matter with the poor artist; I have not seen him for an age, and, now that I recollect, there were none of his paintings this season at the Exhibition. Why, Sir Horace, how very remiss, how very unkind of you never to enquire after him! Good gracious! how forgetful this London life makes the kindest of us!"

At the corner of Museum Street, Sir Horace met two of his friends.

"Ha! John Ashton and Tom Landor! My good fellows, how are you? Whither go you? What! to Little Russell Street?—to Morton Sheridan's?—a note from him?—both of you?—the same as mine! Why, what does the fellow mean by issuing such circulars? Humph! going to give a grand supper, I suppose; exhibiting some of his new sketches, maybe—'matters of supreme importance,'—announcing his forthcoming marriage, perhaps, or making his will!

Ashton and Landor were not the only friends, besides the baronet, whom the distressed artist had invited to his house that night. As they were ushered into the room, they found about ten of their acquaintance already assembled. There was Sir William Hardy, Lord Randolph, John Belamy, the poet Lewis, two Irish M.P.'s, a few young artists, and a distinguished German sculptor.

It was hardly after sun-set, but the last faint streaks of a sickly twilight, still lingering on the purlieus of that foul neighbourhood, in vain struggled to penetrate through the narrow aperture, through which the painter economised the light of day to accommodate it to his purposes, so that the room on first entering appeared plunged into utter darkness, and the reddish glare of a languid coal-fire dancing fitfully over the assembled company as well as on the pale busts, models, and lay-figures scattered in sublime disorder around, gave them a lurid ghastliness which did not much tend to improve the general look of that gloomy apartment.



Morton Sheridan was not a very handsome personage ; but there was something in his open, manly countenance which easily won and permanently secured the good opinion and will of every casual acquaintance. In early youth he was known as a hearty good fellow, a blithe lad full of frolic and glee. As he advanced in life, the intense pursuit of what proved to him an unthankful profession, and, as it was surmised, the *res angusta domi*, had gradually severed him from his gayer associations. He had lived many years abroad, and of late, as Sir Horace has already hinted, had been little seen or heard of. That matters went not very smooth with him, his friends had not the slightest doubt. Still they were at a loss how to account for that general invitation in such very strong terms of adjuration, as they knew him too well not to feel assured that he would sooner starve a thousand times, than apply for relief, or even acquaint any living being with his difficulties.

They found him seated in a leathern arm-chair, dressed in his loose and somewhat fantastic artist's

costume. The cares he had bestowed on his long dark hair, on his linen, on the very folds of his gown, showed that he had taken more than usual pains to prepare himself for the reception of his visitors. He looked calm and collected; on his countenance, always beaming with intelligence, there sat now an air of easy dignity and serenity, which drove at once from his friends' minds the sad forebodings, naturally aroused in their fancies, on receiving that hasty and ominous summons.

He rose, and bowed in silence to each of them as they made their appearance, motioning each of the new comers to one of the chairs that had been already disposed round the fire, and which began now to fill the poor but somewhat spacious apartment. Before him, at an oblique angle with the chimney, there stretched a long writing-table covered with green cloth; beside the table, on his right, rose a huge easel, against which rested a large picture, turned upon its face. The table, the easel, and other instruments and paraphernalia of his profession, compactly drawn up, apparently

with a view to make room for his guests, constituted a line of defence, behind which the painter found himself entrenched, as it were, and separated from the rest of the company. Presently an untidy wench, who officiated as the poor artist's only attendant, brought in and laid upon the table a pair of lighted candles, snuffed them, and curtsied as she left the room.

"Gentlemen," at last began Sheridan, as the door closed upon the heels of the retreating domestic, "kind friends, I thank you! In my days of youthful sanguineness, when I fancied that every smiling countenance betokened a loving heart, I could hardly have hoped that my call had power to bring so many friends to my side. In this hour of final despondency, when I needed only a few warm and true bosoms to bear me through this last trial, I cannot express how proud, how happy you make me by complying with so much readiness, in so great a number with my request. I thank you; as you have not deserted your poor friend, so may God never forsake you!

“ Hurried on, goaded on in our mad race of life, in obedience to that instinct of self to which alone we continue true to the last, it is no wonder if we have no leisure to look after such of our fellow-wayfarers as may happen to sink overpowered by the road-side. Grappling each of us with our own share of misery, far from reaching a helping hand, we scarcely shrink from treading on our fallen neighbour, as we rush onward in our headlong strife. No man has a right to complain if he be left to perish unheeded; because evil is stronger than any, stronger than all of us; and, in the experienced inefficiency of our means of resistance, we recoil from the idle contemplation of sufferings it is not in our power to avert or to soothe.

“ But he,—the weary pilgrim, the wounded warrior bleeding to death on this wide battle-field of the earth,—he who has long manfully borne up against the tide of adversity, and, after strenuous but hopeless endeavours, crosses his arms on his breast and resigns himself to his doom,—shall he

be charged with faint-heartedness, if on the moment of succumbing he be tempted to implore from his fellow-beings—not their assistance, for despair admits of no auxiliaries—not their regret and sympathy, not at least that sterile commiseration which is almost invariably akin to contempt—but a word of reverence even more than love—the assurance that he has well deserved of his race, that he has stood his ground as beseemed a man, and even in his downfall only yielded to irresistible iron necessity?

“It is for such a purpose that I requested your attendance here this evening. I wanted your countenance to a decisive, irrevokable measure which I am determined to adopt. I required your good leave for a long, long journey, from which I shall never return; and I wished you to stand on the shore and bear witness to the calmness and security with which I take my departure—with which I bid my country, my friends, and all I held dearest in life, a lasting farewell.

“It will be no difficult task to acquaint you with

the causes that have led to this resolution. Mine was not an adventurous life, and there are hardly any of its leading vicissitudes with which you are unfamiliar. It was an artist's life—an unsuccessful artist's. It was the powerless struggle of an aspiring, soaring intelligence against unresisting and yet unyielding matter; the melancholy waste of all the faculties of a strong mind on a field of exertion in which unwearied industry, stern perseverance unswerving will, are, by themselves, utterly unavailing. My genius lied within me! From the first moment that, an untutored country lad, I sketched the old church in our village-green, Art, as an evil demon, took possession of its devoted victim. Like the arch-tempter, it exacted the sacrifice of my soul in exchange for its creative gifts; but, different in this from the great enemy of human kind, it secured its prize without being true to its own share of the compact. It worked upon me the persuasion that nature had lavished on me the elements of greatness; it repeated incessantly in my ears, 'Thou, too, art a painter!' an egre-

gious hallucination of which death alone can bring the total disenchantment.

“ From that moment I was a doomed man. My scanty patrimony, the bloom of my youth, the sunshine of my days, the repose of my nights, were wasted on shapeless creations, beneath whose very features there seemed to lurk a fiendish sneer at the stark impotence of their maker. The glow of heated fancy, the trance of inspiration, the ineffable voluptuousness of conception, during the pressure of which I felt as if floating through an ethereal region between earth and paradise, subsided at once on the first attempt at mixing my colours. My buoyant imagination seemed limed, as it were, by the viscid clay on my palette, and every flutter of its wings sunk it deeper and deeper, till it utterly deprived it of its ingenite power of flight. All the tints of the rainbow could not body forth the colourless dreams of my fancy. The fitting phantoms of my brain refused themselves to all mechanical incarnation. The spark which I presumed to steal from the sun could not live in the mephitic

medium of an earthly atmosphere. Every touch of my brush was like a downfall from the clouds. My failure was always proportionate to the degree of previous excitement. If it ever happened that my works secured the suffrage of the vulgar (for without some partial success I could hardly have fed so long on my deplorable illusion), if my paintings ever met with public applause at the Exhibition, it was only when the hand wrought without the head, only in those moments of mental exhaustion, in those lucid intervals of my dreary infirmity, when my fingers went, almost unconsciously, through the mechanical routine of my craft. On these vile specimens of the materialism of art, I hardly deigned to cast a look of disgust and scorn; but those vague, shadowy sketches which I intended for a revelation of my heavenly visions, the pictures in which form was to be made subservient to spirit, in which the artist aspired to be, not the imitator, but the master of nature, those were never openly exposed, never privately shown to mortal eye; in fact, never achieved. Before



those crude fantasies I stood as if spell-bound, gazing upon them with a vacant stare, as if my eyes were gifted with the photographic power of the sun, as if the realisation of my unsubstantial conceit were to be the work of magnetism or magic, rather than the result of manual exertion, as if the canvas could, like a mirror, reflect the image of my intangible thought.

“ In this manner long hours were spent in a consuming agony of inaction, amidst the withering throes of a barren travail; and when I finally rose, and tore myself from the charm of that ecstatic contemplation, my head swam round, throbbing and aching.

“ Then I looked around me, into the mad, whirling world, from which I fancied I had secluded myself past return, and with the zest of long abstinence, deep for a season, I dived into its bewildering eddies, and in its enervating pleasures, in its cramping inanities, I strove to lull myself into utter unconsciousness. In vain! To exhaustion and satiety regret succeeded and self-reproof, and

at the first twinge of remorse, that sleepless longing for something unattainable, incomprehensible, again sprang up in my bosom.

“ Thus ruled by an unconquerable fatality, I returned to my dreary toil. For a brief space it seemed as if my spirit, refreshed by that short respite, had broken through the trammels of material obstacles. For a few touches the hand harmonised with the head. Oh, rapture! My idea, radiant with unearthly tints, started into life under my trembling pencil. But alas! but alas! to the deceitful beams of that transient aurora chaos succeeded and deeper night. The creation of my morbid imagination assumed before my eyes gigantic, terrific dimensions. It pressed on my giddy brain till it crushed, it overwhelmed it; till I either fell senseless at the foot of my abortive sketch, or, in a paroxysm of rage, I tore it from the easel and trod it down with deep curses of frantic despair!

“ At war with myself, I extended my execration to all surrounding objects. To the dullness of this

gloomy climate, to the tardiness of my northern blood, to the grovelling spirit of my unimaginative countrymen, rather than to any deficiency of talent, I was willing to attribute my want of success. I rated the stars which had cast my lot on a land saddened by the incessant frowns of Heaven. I fancied that painting, like the vine, could never thrive under this pale, sickly sun; that fancy could have no full swing under the dead weight of this unelastic atmosphere. Urged by that idea, I hastened from a land that could be no home to genius; I abjured it—cursed it! I moved through the Continent an eager pilgrim, with the light step of an enfranchised prisoner. Across the sea, athwart the mountains, I flew to the birth-place of art, to the universal fatherland of great minds. I was in Italy—an Italian! Only in that country has art ever been idealised. I gazed on a Raphael, or a Guido, as a living evidence of the practicability of my wildest conceptions. What thought can be said to be unutterable? What images can fancy conjure up which oil-colours may not convey to

the senses? Art is as infinite as mind itself; and am I not an artist? Let only the secret working of these ancient masters be revealed to me. Their excellence was only the result of a skilful preparation of their colouring materials. It is only in the execution that I have any thing to learn. My conceptions embrace as wide a design as the most daring among them.

“ Alas! I was soon to learn that execution is the beginning as well as the achievement of art. Ten years of anxious wandering were frittered away in bootless efforts to obtain possession of this artist's mechanism, which should be the slave, and yet is nothing less than the tyrant, of thought. This mixing of colours, which I despised as a mere handicraft common to the meanest dauber, was, however, the utmost attainment of sovereign intellects. It is a gift as rare in Italy, at the present day, as in any other part of the world. It constituted the peculiar charm of the ancient masters; it was invented, perfected by them, and died with them. In my attempts at an emulous

imitation of their master-pieces I lost that nerve of originality in which I had hitherto prided myself. Truth began, at last, gradually, but irresistibly, to force itself upon my reluctant mind. The bitter conviction glared before my eyes. The brush dropped from my hands, my head sunk on my bosom—I was not intended for a painter!

“ I began to comprehend that those bright, flitting fancies on which I had laid my claims to an artist’s genius may equally glimmer through the benighted understanding of the dullest of men. That they are the vital spark inherent in the spiritual substance of every man’s soul, latent under the deepest layers of coarse sensualism, slumbering but not extinguished, under the ashes of the coldest materialism ; that every man’s mind is teeming with volumes of never-to-be-written poetry ; that each of us might say, with a boast analogous to Archimedes’s, ‘ Give me but a language, and I will reveal Heaven ! ’ But that he alone is indeed a Creator who suffers not those familiar demons of imagination to run riot in his brain, but, with the might

of a fearless enchanter, secures them in his grasp, subjects them to his will, forces them into daylight under the shape of words, colours, or notes; that the privilege of genius consists less in the conception than in the expression of thought; that, in short, a man is only a poet in as much as he is a versifier; only a painter, in proportion as he is a colourist.

“ Thus did I see myself baffled in the sole object of my whole life. In the midst of my career I became aware that I had followed a road without issue. Great God! upwards of thirty years lived in vain!

“ And yet this blasting conviction, this death-blow to my fondest expectations, found my heart more calmly resigned than I had anticipated. No stroke of affliction can bear down the stubbornness of human vitality. An outcast from the temple of art, I continued to worship at its threshold. I shrunk from the creator into the mere amateur. I followed, a discarded suitor, in the train of the beauty that spurned me. The quiet enjoyments of

the man of taste are not without relish even for one who aimed at the more tempestuous raptures of operative genius. A long contemplation of the beautiful gives our mind all the refinement of the most exquisite Epicurism. A visit to the Tribune, or a lounge in the halls of the Vatican,—a thunder-storm in the Appennines, or a sunset in the Bay of Naples, had lost none of their charms, even though I had relinquished all hope of reproducing the wonders of nature, or rivalling the prodigies of art. Sense was not deadened or blunted, even though deprived of all vent and utterance. Inaction is not idleness in Italy; there is life in the air you inhale, life in your listless langour, life in the very dreams of your slumbers.

“ From this delicious state of supineness domestic afflictions came rudely to awake me. My father died, and the sins of his prodigality were severely visited on his no less extravagant son. I hastened back to England only to find myself an orphan and a beggar. In presence of staring poverty I was roused into exertion. Once more

I took up my pencil, no longer, alas! to wrestle with the overpowering emotions of an exuberant fancy, no longer to toil for endless renown, but to engage in a desperate struggle—for bread!

“ Ten years’ absence had made me almost a stranger at home; still a few persons were living who had witnessed the earliest essay of what they looked upon as a promising genius. A long sojourn in Italy was no trifling recommendation in the eyes of the untravelled part of our wealthy citizens. Among these lower ranks of patrons of the fine arts I was for a season a novelty. I was invited to give life in my canvas to the round face of an overfed alderman; to produce a faithful imitation of the sharp features, shrivelled neck, and red elbows of his eldest daughter; to delineate the crazy chimney-tops of his Elizabethan villa at Hackney. In a profession in which mediocrity itself is an abomination, I consented at once to sink to the lowest order. I became a mere drudge. Still, even yet, I shrunk not from the degrading task. I drank my cup to the lees. I despised myself, and lived on.



" But I prostrated myself in vain. Fortune could not be propitiated by the most abject acts of dastardly submission. My vulgar employers gradually dropped me. Perhaps my talents did not even come up to their standard of excellence, or some successful rival stepped forward with stronger claims to their patronage. Perhaps, also, my inborn haughtiness and irritability were not always sufficiently curbed in presence of those purse-proud idiots. Perhaps, in some unguarded moment, I betrayed my repugnance to the vile jobs that were offered to me.

" I deny not the charge. My stubborn spirit, my fiery temper, may have had an ample share in working out my destitution. Adversity never fails to find a ready auxiliary in the morbid tendencies of our soul. Man is but too often the worst enemy of himself. But, to whatever causes my calamities might be ascribed, my desolation was now complete. I was left alone, with no prospects but sheer starvation before me.

" Thank God! I had now nothing to fear. All

hopes of happiness were long since blighted ; but I was now denied the very means of subsistence. Society cast me out of its bosom. The earth had not a square foot of ground for me to stand upon. I welcomed despair ; I hugged it with a lover's transport ; I revelled in its cold, withering embrace. Heaven and earth had forsaken me. I considered myself acquitted of all debts. I was at last thoroughly, absolutely, unconditionally free. I breathed again. I was now at liberty to do as I pleased with myself. I determined—to die.

“ Yes, my friends, I have gazed upon the sun which shall never rise again for me. I have watched the deepening night which is to be the forerunner of a darker and more durable night. I am resolved on self-destruction !

“ Start not—answer not—do not stir ! Step not between me and my irremovable resolution. I anticipate all your remonstrances. I have provided against all opposition on your part. Think you I would so freely avow my design, if it were in the power of any living being to frustrate it ? I am

determined to die, and no man who loves me could conscientiously wish to thwart my purpose.

“ Spare me your useless protestations of unbounded devotion. Tell me not that your friendly zeal is ready to snap your purse-strings, that the poorest of you is willing to break the last crust with an old friend. God bless you! I mean no reproach. It is the way of the world, and I hold you not accountable for a long neglect which originated in the common selfishness of mankind. But during these last three years, in which I was plunged deeper and deeper in this abyss of misery, which of you sought me out? who remembered me? who thought it his duty to offer me a share in his fortune? Had you, to-morrow, heard the announcement of my death by starvation, would all your benevolent intentions save you from the charge of murder?

“ What! you give no relief unsolicited? But know you not that a man of honour dies, and begs not; that he hides, denies his distress, never implores your charity, till he has resolved not to

survive his humiliation ? Oh ! take not pride from him to whom nothing else is left : the poor alone has a right to be proud. It is his last defensive weapon to save him from being trampled to the dust. I could not accept of any man's bounties ; nothing could induce me to live by your alms. I asked for employment ; I offered to work for my bread. I shrunk from no toil ; I recoiled from no degradation. The world has no occasion for my services ; I can make myself no useful member of society, and I will not hang on it, a parasite.

“ Once fixed on this determination, you will ask what object made me solicit your presence. Do not think that I wanted courage to die alone, or that I indulged a vain wish to exhibit my firmness before you. I require neither your support nor your commiseration. But on this supreme moment I felt a longing for a final communion with men. I obeyed an almost animal instinct of clinging to life even in the jaws of death. Had I been stretched on my death-bed by consumption, or by any other lingering complaint, you would

have vied with each other in performing the last offices by my side, you would have smoothed my pillow, you would have received my last breath, treasured up my parting words. Should it be otherwise now, because despair, and not disease, suddenly forces me from this world, and urges me to another, where nothing but darkness and terror await me? Hold out your hands—stand by me! Death is bitter, my friends, even though life may have become unbearable. Once more, to-day, I mingled with the world, as I took leave of it; with the springing step of buoyant youth I dashed through the crowded streets. How busy was life around me, whilst death lay heavy on my bosom; and the day was so pure and balmy, and every tree in the park was in blossom, and every carriage glittered, and every horse pranced, and every woman smiled.

“Alas! the smile of woman! I have not revealed yet the deepest source of affliction. I loved, my friends, and never was loved. My arms never clasped the object of my tenderness,—my

head never rested on a faithful bosom. I loved, not a woman, but woman. With an artist's power of abstraction I worshipped unsubstantial idols; as long as I fancied myself a creator, I was dead to the charms of God's creatures. Whilst my pencil conjured down angels from Heaven, how could I long for mortal embraces? You see this canvas on my easel:—that was my first picture and the last. I worked at that canvas till I could tell my years in every touch of the brush; that was the woman I loved. It is no more finished than the thousand sketches which I have torn to pieces in my sullen mood of despondency. It is no less a failure; but I loved it, and could not bring myself to destroy it. Touch it not now, you will see it when I shall be no more.

“ But when I abjured art, when I found myself an outcast from my paradise of dreams, groping through this benighted world, struggling against want and obscurity, oh! then I sought refuge in a woman's bosom—then I gazed wistfully after every fair form that swept heedlessly past the forlorn

painter, and I felt as if I could have held them by the hem of their garment, and thrown my arms round them, and pressed them to my bosom, and cried, 'Love me!—oh! let me be loved ere I die!'

"Alas! all of them seemed to read in my eyes the despair that sat on my soul. They shuddered at my haggard look, they feared me. Oh! he lies who describes woman as a tender, sensitive being. They also shrink from the contact of poverty and sorrow; they also refuse to smile on the wretch the world frowns upon. They do, indeed, delight in scenes of feigned misery, in fictitious recitals of imaginary disasters; for to their keen sensibilities sadness itself is a luxury, and tears a source of voluptuous emotions; but the sight of actual misery, the approach of real distress, is as unwelcome to them as to the most selfish of the coarser sex. All anxious for our safety, we steer wide of the craft perilling by our side in the ocean of life,—we dread a collision with its foundering wreck,—we stand in a superstitious awe of the deadly grasp of its drowning mariner. No—no! the sunbeam of

woman's eye never shot across the gloom of my despair, the music of her voice never stilled the tempests of my spirit. Unloved I descend to my grave.

" Let, then, calm friendship surround him whom all warmer affections deserted. Leave me not, my friends! You see I am calm and collected. Profoundly grieved, incurably wounded in my heart's core, but not unmanned, nor demented.

" God forgive me! I am no suicide. The world issued the warrant, and left me only the choice of my death. I have chosen the shortest and easiest. Be ye my witnesses that I depart at peace with mankind. None of them ever wronged me. It is no man's fault if our race have outgrown its appointed abode, if it has multiplied till the earth can no longer hold it. Let us cast lots. Let the less fortunate make room for their betters. I will set the first example. There is another world, let us hope, for those who find no place in this—another world, incomprehensible, but, undoubtedly, boundless and endless."



After these words, Sheridan ceased abruptly. His friends had heard him in silent amazement. Nothing could be more astonishing than the contrast between the mildness and sedateness of the artist's manner and the terrible import of his words. His calmness deceived the most discerning among the bystanders. They hung down their heads, they dared not raise their eyes into each other's faces. There were moments, indeed, in which some of them would have interrupted him. They waited for a pause, for a fair opportunity to start up and secure the unhappy madman. He gave them no time.

He rose suddenly at the conclusion of his speech. He stared at them for one second with a cold, bitter, smile, then, with the swiftness of lightning, he tore open his loose gown, and a short, lead-coloured blade was seen gleaming in the air.

Of all that company one only had been a silent, but not idle spectator. Sir Horace Thorogood had glided unperceived between the easel and the wall.

Sheridan had hardly time to raise his arm for the fell stroke, ere the weapon was wrenched from his hand.

“ Young man, ‘not so!’ ” exclaimed the baronet as he secured the maniac in his powerful embrace ; “ ask us not to stand by and witness such a work of awful butchery. We admit the justice of all your past grievances. Could self-destruction annihilate bygone evils, could suicide be retrospective, it might, perhaps, be a blessing to you. But how dare you murder the future ? How know you what destinies are in store for you ? ‘ Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ ”

Sir Horace said no more ; he knew how to minister better than words to a diseased mind. A hackney-coach was called for ; the struggling maniac was almost forced into it. Sir Horace bade them drive to his house in Harley Street.

On the following morning a large number of the baronet’s friends took luncheon with him. A picture was produced ; it was the same that poor